

## Reading the Scottish Enlightenment

# Library of the Written Word

VOLUME 10

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## The Handpress World

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VOLUME 5

# Reading the Scottish Enlightenment

Books and their Readers in Provincial  
Scotland, 1750–1820

*By*

Mark R.M. Towsey



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*On the cover:* Books lent out of the Library at Craigston Castle between 16th November 1779 and 10th June 1780, with names of borrowers. Courtesy of Mr William Patresi Urquhart of Craigston Castle, by Turriff, Aberdeenshire; image by Mrs Sandra Cumming.

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To the memory of my late schoolteachers,  
who always encouraged me to read critically

Philip Balkwill  
and  
Mark Loughlin



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Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Stirling, and Local Library Collections and Archives in Aberdeen, Ayr, Blackburn, Cupar, Dumbarton, Dumfries, Dunbar, Dundee, Dunfermline, Forfar, Glasgow, Greenock, Hawick, Inverness, Kilmarnock, Kirkcaldy, Kirkcudbright, Leadhills, Lerwick, Loanhead, Montrose, Oldmeldrum, Paisley, Perth, Selkirk, Wanlockhead and Wick. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the owners of over twenty separate private archival collections for permission to use material in their possession – not to mention the enormous thanks due to the Secretary of the NRAS for facilitating access to their collections. Many more individuals welcomed me into their homes to browse their library shelves in the hunt for catalogues, borrowing records and marginalia, and I thank all of them for perpetuating the hospitality, humanity and regard for learning that characterised many of the eighteenth-century readers discussed in this book. In this regard no one has invested more time, curiosity and munchies than Dr Bill Zachs, whose library is one of the hidden treasures of the “Athens of the North” in the twenty-first century. Mr William Patresi Urquhart of Craigston Castle generously allowed me to use the image that adorns the front cover; the photographic credit belongs to Sandra Cumming, who continues to work wonders on the libraries at both Craigston and Duff House.

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Liverpool  
November 2009



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALIS	Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service
Alston	<i>Library History Database</i> , <a href="http://www.r-alston.co.uk">www.r-alston.co.uk</a>
Beinecke	Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University
<i>BH</i>	<i>Book History</i>
<i>BJ18CS</i>	<i>British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
BL	British Library
<i>CHLB2</i>	G. Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (eds.), <i>The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640–1850</i> (Cambridge, 2006)
<i>Cockburn's Letters</i>	<i>Lord Cockburn: Select Letters</i> (Edinburgh, 2005)
<i>ECCO</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Collections Online</i> , <a href="http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO">http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO</a>
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
<i>Fasti</i>	<i>Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae</i> , 9 vols, ed. Hew Scott (Edinburgh, 1915)
GCL	Grolier Club Library
GUL	Glasgow University Library
Hume, <i>Essays</i>	David Hume, <i>Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary</i> (Indianapolis, 1987)
Hume, <i>History</i>	David Hume, <i>History of England</i> , 6 vols (Indianapolis, 1983)
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
Kaufman	P. Kaufman, "The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland", <i>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</i> , 59 (1965)
Lawson	J. MacFarlane, <i>The Life and Times of George Lawson</i> (Edinburgh, 1862)
<i>LH</i>	<i>Library History</i>
<i>Mackenzie's Letters</i>	<i>Henry Mackenzie: Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock</i> (Münster, 1967)
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRAS	National Register of Archives for Scotland
<i>Ochertyre</i>	<i>Letters of John Ramsay of Ochertyre 1799–1812</i> , ed. B. L. H. Horn (Edinburgh, 1966)

ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (2004) <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com/">http://www.oxforddnb.com/</a>
OSA	Sir John Sinclair (ed.), <i>The Statistical Account of Scotland</i> (1791–1799; Wakefield, 1978)
PBSA	<i>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</i>
PL	Public Library
Ridpath	<i>Diary of George Ridpath, Minister of Stichel 1755–1761</i> (Edinburgh, 1922)
St Clair	W. St Clair, <i>The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period</i> (Cambridge, 2004)
SBTI	<i>Scottish Book Trade Index</i>
SHR	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
SAUL	St Andrews University Library
Smith, WN	Adam Smith, <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> , 2 vols (Indianapolis, 1976)
Smith, TMS	Adam Smith, <i>The Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> (Indianapolis, 1982)
SV18C	<i>Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century</i>



## INTRODUCTION

### “ENLIGHTENMENT EVERYWHERE”: LOCATING THE READER IN THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT

Few casual students of the Scottish Enlightenment will have heard of George Ridpath, minister of the village of Stitches, near Kelso, and author of *A Border History of Scotland and England* (1776). According to the editor of his diary, Ridpath was “a man of rare culture, a friend of the most celebrated Scots literati of the time, and an earnest student in many branches of science”.<sup>1</sup> Though he made regular journeys to Edinburgh to attend meetings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, for the most part the diary demonstrates that Ridpath led a quiet existence in rural Roxburghshire, with the leisure time to indulge his favourite pursuits of gardening, socialising, star-gazing and reading. As such, this document, with its remarkably complete portrayal of the commonplace interests and values of a provincial clergyman, has hardly featured in modern scholarship on the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> Yet what Ridpath’s diary illustrates for the student of Hume, Smith et al is the extent to which the Enlightenment produced by such luminaries percolated through to readers in provincial Scotland. He read with obvious relish the works of his acquaintances David Hume and William Robertson, even though he did not always agree with them, and supported the Moderate *literati* on the contentious issues of the day – such as the militia debate and the Douglas

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<sup>1</sup> Ridpath, viii; the original is at NAS CH1/5/122–3.

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Enlightenment was first conceived by W. R. Scott, *Francis Hutcheson: His Life, Teachings and Position in the History of Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1900); see also G. Bryson, *Man and Society: the Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1945) and H. Trevor-Roper, “The Scottish Enlightenment”, SV18C, 68 (1967). For discussion of the origin of the term, see J. Robertson, “The Scottish Contribution to the Enlightenment” and R. B. Sher, “Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment: the Lessons of Book History”, both in P. Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Rochester, 2000). The two have recently released two very different book-length treatments: J. Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge, 2005); R. B. Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book: Scottish Authors & their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland & America* (Chicago, 2006).

controversy.<sup>3</sup> Above all, he conducted his daily affairs along the very lines that Richard Sher suggests characterised “Enlightenment supporters everywhere...a primary commitment to science, polite learning, toleration, moderatism, reasonableness, virtue, justice, improvement, and liberty”.<sup>4</sup> Though he was not the most original or insightful thinker, his example suggests that consumers of the great texts of the Scottish Enlightenment – the men and women who read them, and whose interest made them commercially viable – reflected seriously on what they read and through doing so participated in the experience in a way that modern scholarship has so far grossly underestimated.

# I

Peter Gay’s seminal interpretation argued that the Enlightenment, with its roots in France, was scientific, anti-religious and possessed with a profound belief in the glorious progress of reason. Intellectuals who demonstrated these characteristics were admitted to a familial group of *philosophes* whose deliberate aim was to bring about the final victory in the battle between reason and irrationality.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation implicitly denies that the Enlightenment differed from place to place. Gay envisaged

a specific, homogeneous movement which had its quintessence in France, and, if other countries are properly to be judged as having undergone Enlightenment, then they must be seen to have shared fully in those very characteristics which marked out the French experience.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ridpath*, 118, 130–1, 262–4, 319 on Hume’s works; 240–2 on Robertson’s *History of Scotland*; on the controversy provoked by the clergyman John Home’s play *Douglas*, compare 118 and 127 with R. B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: the Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1985), 74–93; on Enlightenment support for the establishment of a Scottish militia, compare 111 with J. Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (London, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> R. B. Sher, “Storm over the Literati”, *Cenchrastus*, 28 (Winter 1987–1988), 43. R. B. Sher and J. R. Smitten (eds.), *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1990) present a very similar check list of “common values and beliefs that were shared by “enlightened” men of letters everywhere, including science, virtue, reason, toleration, cosmopolitanism, polite learning, critical methods, freedom of the press, and fundamental human rights”, 5.

<sup>5</sup> P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols (London, 1966–1969); R. Darnton, “In Search of the Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 43 (1971), 113–32.

<sup>6</sup> D. J. Witherington, “What was Distinctive about the Scottish Enlightenment?”, in J. J. Carter and J. H. Pittock (eds.), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987), 9;

Thus many of the more influential accounts of the Scottish Enlightenment have been inextricably linked to the rarefied terms in which Gay defined the European experience, if not guided strictly by the ideological criteria he lays down for Enlightenment.

In a pair of barnstorming articles entitled "The Scottish Enlightenment", Hugh Trevor-Roper identified a group of six Scottish *philosophes* including – alongside David Hume, Gay's "complete Modern Pagan"<sup>7</sup> – Adam Ferguson, Francis Hutcheson, John Millar, William Robertson and Adam Smith, who were the "real intellectual pioneers", as opposed to the many others whom Trevor-Roper dismissed as mere "camp followers". In an interpretation that infamously stressed the significance of "alien" influences, namely Jacobitism and Episcopalianism, in redeeming Scotland from her seventeenth-century backwardness, Trevor-Roper was primarily concerned with identifying the distinctive set of ideas which characterised Scottish thought – for him, those ideas that addressed "the social mechanism of progress".<sup>8</sup>

While Trevor-Roper's vision of Scottish culture in the seventeenth century has been fully revised, the narrow terms in which his Enlightenment is defined have often been retained.<sup>9</sup> Charles Camic, for instance, chooses to exclude Hutcheson from Trevor-Roper's list because he belonged to an earlier epoch in Scottish thought. This time Ferguson, Hume, Millar, Robertson and Smith are "the known population of enlightened individuals" in Scotland, their works are "the cynosure for all who wish to understand the Scottish Enlightenment" and the remainder of Scottish society "retained the orientations that had

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Withrington referred particularly to R. Porter, "The Enlightenment in England", in his and M. Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> Gay, *Enlightenment*, 401 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor-Roper, "The Scottish Enlightenment", 1639–40; idem., "The Scottish Enlightenment", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 322 (1977), 371–88. For discussion, see A. Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), 3–4; Sher, *Church and University*, 4–8; Sher, "Storm", 42–4; C. J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1997), 189–90; and C. Kidd, "Lord Dacre and the Politics of the Scottish Enlightenment", *SHR*, 84 (2005), 202–20.

<sup>9</sup> H. Ouston, "Cultural Life from the Restoration to the Union", in A. Hook (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature, II, 1660–1800* (Aberdeen, 1987), 11–31; H. Ouston, "York in Edinburgh: James VII and the patronage of learning in Scotland, 1674–1688", in J. Dwyer, R. A. Mason, and A. Murdoch (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh 1982), 133–55; R. L. Emerson, "Scottish Cultural Change 1660–1710, and the Union of 1707", in J. Robertson (ed.), *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995), 121–44; idem., "Sir Robert Sibbald, Kt, the Royal Society of Scotland and the origins of the Scottish Enlightenment", *The Annals of Science*, 45 (1988), 41–72.

been integral to pre-Enlightened Scotland".<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Phillipson goes even further, reducing Scotland's distinctive experience to the work of just two men, Hume and Smith, whose "polite determinism" was the "trigger which detonated the social and cultural forces which turned Edinburgh into the Athens of Britain". Quite apart from the latter's association with the University of Glasgow, Phillipson asserts that "there is an important sense in which the history of the Scottish Enlightenment *is* the history of Edinburgh".<sup>11</sup>

But the quest for Enlightenment beyond France, often tinged with some expectation of national prestige, has ultimately led to a reaction against Gay's definition, encouraging, according to John Robertson, "an altogether broader appreciation of the...variety of its intellectual concerns and forms of expression".<sup>12</sup> It has become fashionable to tease out continuities between Scotland's Enlightenment and her earlier intellectual traditions.<sup>13</sup> So too, scholars have increasingly sought to incorporate the scientific, moral and literary achievements of eighteenth-century Scots into the account of her 'distinctive' Enlightenment. We now have a far greater appreciation of the international prestige and historical significance of Scottish scientists, particularly Joseph Black, William Cullen and James Hutton, while Roger L. Emerson has produced reams of empirical evidence to support his view that natural philosophy was central to the development of Scottish thought from the late seventeenth century onwards.<sup>14</sup> Literary figures

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<sup>10</sup> C. Camic, *Experience and Enlightenment: Socialization for Cultural Change in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1983), 50; 45; 12; 50–1.

<sup>11</sup> N. Phillipson, "Towards a Definition of the Scottish Enlightenment", in P. Fritz and D. Williams (eds.), *City and Society in the Eighteenth-century* (Toronto, 1973), 147 and 125; Berry, *Social Theory*, 189–90. For Smith's association with Glasgow, see A. Hook and R. B. Sher (eds.), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> J. Robertson, "The Scottish Enlightenment", *Rivista Storico Italiano*, 108 (1996), 795.

<sup>13</sup> For earlier traditions, see D. Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century: Union and Enlightenment* (London, 2002); A. Broadie, *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1990); R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (eds.), *The origins and nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1982); J. Rendall, *The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment* (London, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> J. R. R. Christie, "The Origins and Development of the Scottish Scientific Community, 1680–1760", *History of Science*, 7 (1974), 122–41; P. Wood, "The Scientific Revolution in Scotland", in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds.), *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (London, 1992), 263–87; A. L. Donovan, *Philosophical Chemistry in the Scottish Enlightenment: the Doctrines and Discoveries of William Cullen and Joseph Black* (Edinburgh, 1975); P. Jones (ed.), *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1988); P. Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in*

such as John Home, Henry Mackenzie, James ‘Ossian’ Macpherson and Sir Walter Scott are now recognised as integral figures, synthesising many of the historiographical and moralistic concerns of their peers, while Scottish *belles lettres* (pioneered by Smith, Robert Watson, Hugh Blair and Lord Kames) is celebrated for its seminal contribution to the development of English Literature as an academic discipline in its own right.<sup>15</sup> Most dramatically, given the role of anti-clericalism in Gay’s scheme, it is now widely accepted that a distinctive theology was at the heart of the Enlightenment in Scotland, developed by the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland and dominated intellectually by literary clergymen like Robertson, Blair, Ferguson and Home.<sup>16</sup>

Besides this generic inclusiveness, historians have also located the ideas of the most famous figures within their broader intellectual and cultural context. John Dwyer has argued convincingly for the vitality of moral discourse in eighteenth-century Scotland, including such long forgotten moralists as James Fordyce, John Logan, William Craig and Alexander Abercromby alongside Smith and Hume.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, with lesser-known historians like Hugo Arnot, William Duff, Lachlan Shaw and Gilbert Stuart sharing the stage with their more illustrious peers, David Allan has demonstrated that Enlightenment historians shared a distinctive heritage in the humanist and Calvinist scholarship of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>18</sup>

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*Reinterpretation* (Rochester, 2000); C. W. J. Withers and P. Wood (eds.), *Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment* (East Linton, 2002). For the contribution of Roger L. Emerson, see in particular “Sir Robert Sibbald Kt.”; “Science and the Origins and Concerns of the Scottish Enlightenment”, *History of Science*, 26 (1988), 333–66; “Science and Moral Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment”, in M. A. Stewart (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1990), 11–36.

<sup>15</sup> On Home, see Sher, *Church and University*; H. Gaskell (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (London, 1991); F. J. Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1988); J. Anderson, *Sir Walter Scott and History* (Edinburgh, 1981); on Mackenzie, see J. Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1987); M. G. Moran (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians* (Westport, CT, 1994); R. Crawford, *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Sher, *Church and University*; R. Sher and A. Murdoch, “Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland, 1750–1800”, in N. MacDougall (ed.), *Church, Politics and Society: Scotland, 1408–1929* (Edinburgh, 1983), 197–220; I. D. L. Clark, “From Protest to Reaction: the moderate regime in the Church of Scotland, 1752–1805”, in N. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement: essays in Scottish history in the eighteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1970; 1996 ed.), 200–24.

<sup>17</sup> Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*; idem., *The Age of the Passions* (Edinburgh, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> D. Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh, 1993).

Though this recent broadening of horizons is a welcome dynamic in the intellectual economy of Scottish Enlightenment studies, the problem, as with all such extensions, is where to stop.<sup>19</sup> In uncovering ‘discourses’ we need to include all authors who might be said to have contributed to a contemporary debate. Yet at some point we have to draw a line between original thought and the collection and reproduction of others’ ideas. Moreover, some scholars have argued stridently that we need to distinguish between the political economy, historiography and philosophy of eighteenth-century Scots – what are traditionally seen as the ‘core concerns’ of the Enlightenment – and their scientific, literary and artistic pursuits. As the leading successor to Trevor-Roper’s approach, for instance, Robertson warns that an uncritically inclusive approach to the Scottish Enlightenment harbours a threat to its integrity as an analytical tool: “the historian... might as well accept the existence of a variety of Enlightenments, in the plural, and abandon ‘the’ Enlightenment to the lumber room of discarded historical concepts”.<sup>20</sup> The ‘national contexts’ approach, in its most extreme expressions, has implied that ‘anything goes’ in Enlightenment studies, particularly with regard to Scotland. While this is not necessarily a bad thing – even Kant and his contemporaries could come to no agreement on what constituted *Aufklärung*<sup>21</sup> – the ‘Scottish Enlightenment’ requires some revision for the concept to have any historiographical value; to mark it out, as Anand Chitnis argues, from any other “active cultural age” in Scottish letters.<sup>22</sup>

## II

Quite apart from these as yet unresolved faultlines at the heart of our understanding of the Scottish Enlightenment, there are some who still

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<sup>19</sup> For the historiographical background, see D. R. Woolf, “The Writing of Early Modern European Intellectual History”, in M. Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), 307–55.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson, “Scottish Enlightenment”, 801; *Case for the Enlightenment*; for discussion of his inheritance of Trevor-Roper’s approach, see Broadie, *Cambridge Companion*, 3, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment? (1784)”, in P. Hyland (ed.), *The Enlightenment: A Sourcebook and Reader* (London and New York, 2003), 53–8; D. Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), 12.

<sup>22</sup> A. C. Chitnis, “Agricultural improvement, political management and civic virtue in enlightened Scotland: an historiographical critique”, *SV18C*, 245 (1986), 476.

deny that there was any kind of relationship between the *literati* and the wider reading public. They therefore cast doubt on the whole notion of a ‘Scottish Enlightenment’ as it was first conceived by William Robert Scott, who was so struck by the widespread “diffusion of philosophic ideas in Scotland and the encouragement of speculative tastes amongst men of culture”.<sup>23</sup> David Hoeveler contends that it was “largely irrelevant to the Scottish population”, while John Lough makes

the obvious point that such Enlightenment as existed in eighteenth-century Scotland was confined to a tiny minority who lived surrounded by a narrow-minded nationalism and bigoted Puritanism which have survived in part down to our own day.<sup>24</sup>

Yet some historians have developed a cultural interpretation of the Scottish Enlightenment that highlights the perceived role of society in supporting it. In Glasgow, we are told, the academic Enlightenment was enhanced both by the commercial interests of one of the most dynamic cities in late eighteenth-century Europe and by the city’s strong historical predilection for popular Presbyterianism.<sup>25</sup> Aberdeen’s professors, meanwhile, developed a brand of Enlightenment that was orthodox and famously reactionary, derived from the traditionally conservative ideology of the city – Episcopalian and Jacobite by instinct – and underpinned by the relatively independent network of north-east gentry and ministers.<sup>26</sup> By far the greatest attention has been paid in this regard to polite society in Edinburgh, where religious,

<sup>23</sup> Scott, *Francis Hutcheson*, 265–6.

<sup>24</sup> Both quoted by Allan, *Virtue*, 4; J. Lough, “Reflections on Enlightenment and Lumières”, *BJ18CS*, 8 (1985), 1–16.

<sup>25</sup> See Hook and Sher, *Glasgow Enlightenment*; N. C. Landsman, “Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial Identity in Scottish Evangelical Culture”, in R. B. Sher and J. R. Smitten (eds.), *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1990), 29–45; idem., “Presbyterians and Provincial Society: The Evangelical Enlightenment in the West of Scotland, 1740–1775”, in J. Dwyer and R. B. Sher (eds.), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993), 194–209; R. B. Sher, “Commerce, Religion and the Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century Glasgow”, in T. M. Devine and G. Jackson (eds.), *Glasgow, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1830* (Manchester, 1995), 312–59; R. L. Emerson, and P. Wood, “Science and Enlightenment in Glasgow, 1690–1802”, in C. W. J. Withers and P. Wood (eds.), *Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment* (East Linton, 2002); R. H. Campbell, “Scotland’s Neglected Enlightenment”, *History Today*, 40 (1990), 22–8.

<sup>26</sup> See J. J. Carter, and J. H. Pittock (eds.), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987); R. L. Emerson, *Professors, Patronage and Politics: The Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1992); S. A. Conrad, *Citizenship and Common Sense: The Problem of Authority in the Social Background and Social Philosophy of the Wise Club of Aberdeen* (New York, 1987).

legal and cultural institutions supplanted the role of the University in pioneering Enlightenment.<sup>27</sup> As we have seen, at least one influential scholar explicitly equates the Scottish Enlightenment with Edinburgh: the polite New Town, we might imagine, was a safe harbour for new ideas that simply could not flourish in the claustrophobic environment of 'Auld Reekie', nor infiltrate the stifling cultural climate of provincial Scotland.<sup>28</sup> However persuasive this 'cultural' definition of the Scottish Enlightenment has proved, it has so far ignored the extent to which towns, villages and rural communities beyond Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen – what is termed "provincial Scotland" for the purposes of this study – experienced a similar revolution in manners.<sup>29</sup> Still more worryingly, it downplays the extent to which politeness, sociability and clubbability were all core aspects of an "urban renaissance" that effected elite culture throughout the British Isles – not just in Scotland.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For example, see R. L. Emerson, "The Social Composition of Enlightened Scotland: the Select Society of Edinburgh, 1754–1764", *SV18C*, 114 (1973), 291–329; N. Phillipson, "Culture and Society in the Eighteenth-century Province: the Case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment", in L. Stone (ed.), *The University in Society* (Princeton, 1974), 1: 407–48.

<sup>28</sup> The contrast is heavy-handedly drawn by J. Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World* (London, 2003). For the New Town, see M. Cosh, *Edinburgh: The Golden Age* (Edinburgh, 2003); D. Daiches, *Edinburgh* (London, 1978); and the magisterial A. J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh 1750–1840* (Edinburgh, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> I use the term "provincial" throughout this book to describe the Scottish community beyond Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. The term has been used rather differently in Scottish Enlightenment scholarship in the past, notably in the tendency to identify the *literati* collectively as the representatives of a "provincial" culture opposed to London's "metropolitan" culture. See especially, J. Clive and B. Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 11 (1954), 200–13; Phillipson, "Culture and Society"; R. L. Emerson, "Did the Scottish Enlightenment Take Place in an English Cultural Province?", *Lumen*, 14 (1995), 1–24; M. Kugler, "Provincial intellectuals: identity, patriotism, and enlightened peripheries", *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 37 (1996), 156–73.

<sup>30</sup> P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989); P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000); idem., *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600–1800* (London, 1984); P. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns, 1700–1800* (Oxford, 1982); Brewer, *Pleasures*; J. J. Looney, "Cultural Life in the Provinces: Leeds and York, 1720–1820", in A. L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J. M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 483–510. A major research project led by Dr Bob Harris at the Universities of Oxford and Dundee entitled "Scottish Towns and Urban Society in the Age of the Enlightenment, c.1745–1820" is currently in progress, using the concept of improvement to ask whether small Scottish towns experienced an 'urban renaissance' in this period; for a pilot study, see B. Harris, "Towns, Improvement and Cultural Change in Georgian Scotland: the evidence of the Angus burghs, c.1760–1820", *Urban History*, 33 (2006), 195–212.



The burgeoning interest in Aberdeen and Glasgow has at least extended our appreciation of how far the Scottish Enlightenment extended beyond Edinburgh, but we still know very little about its impact beyond the three principal burghs, with only brief studies of Ayr, Haddington and Perth, and nothing in print on Scotland's oldest university town, St Andrews.<sup>31</sup> Yet the presumption persists that the Enlightenment was actually remarkably well-received in Scotland more generally. George Elder Davie, for instance, enthuses that "the ideas argued over at the dinner tables of Charlotte Square...were eagerly overheard and assimilated throughout Scotland, and freely commented on and criticised by persons of the most varied backgrounds".<sup>32</sup> Donald Witherington goes further, positing a definition of the Scottish Enlightenment that emphasises the supposed extent of its reception:

The really *distinctive* mark of Enlightenment in Scotland is that its ideas and ideals were very widely diffused, in all areas and among a very wide span of social groups, in what was for the time a remarkably well-educated and highly literate population in country as well as in town.<sup>33</sup>

With the exception of some generalist work on clubs and societies, however, virtually no empirical research has yet been carried out to establish whether the ideas and habits of mind espoused by the Scottish Enlightenment really were received so positively in provincial Scotland.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> D. Allan, "Provincial Readers and Book Culture in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Perth Library, 1784-c.1800", *The Library*, 4 (2002), 367–89; idem., "The Scottish Enlightenment and the Politics of Provincial Culture: Perth Library and Antiquarian Society, c.1784–1790", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27 (2003), 1–31; J. Strawhorn, "Ayrshire and the Enlightenment" in G. Cruickshank (ed.), *A Sense of Place: Studies in Scottish Local History* (Edinburgh, 1988), 188–201; V. S. Dunstan, "Glimpses into a Town's Reading Habits in Enlightenment Scotland: Analysing the Borrowings of Gray Library, Haddington, 1732–1816", *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 26 (2006), 42–95. For a survey of the impact of Enlightenment ideas and values in St Andrews, see M. Towsey, "St Andrews University in the Scottish Enlightenment: Disseminating the Project of Enlightenment in Provincial Scotland" (unpublished MLitt dissertation, University of St Andrews, 2003); M. Simpson, "You have not such a one in England: St Andrews University Library as an Eighteenth-century Mission Statement", *Library History* (15, 2001); idem., "St Andrews University Library in the Eighteenth Century: Scottish education and print-culture" (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> G. E. Davie, *A Passion for Ideas: Essays on the Scottish Enlightenment II* (ed. M. Macdonald, Edinburgh, 1994), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Witherington, "What was Distinctive?", 15.

<sup>34</sup> D. D. McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement: A Survey of Eighteenth-Century Literary Clubs and Societies* (Washington, 1969) is still the major study of eighteenth-century clubbability, though it is in need of some revision in respect of provincial clubs;

## III

In addressing each of these intractable problems, scholars have yet to consider what might be learnt from the experiences of people who bought and read books in eighteenth-century Scotland. As Immanuel Kant made clear in the most celebrated contemporary discussion of the aims and objectives of *Aufklärung*, enlightened *philosophes* throughout Europe really did care what readers made of their books.<sup>35</sup> A particularly prominent feature of generalist introductions to the Scottish Enlightenment in recent years has been the claim that the Scots *literati* explicitly set out to forge the modern world – Arthur L. Herman’s *The Scottish Enlightenment* was published in America with the preposterous subtitle *The True Story of How Western Europe’s Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It*.<sup>36</sup> Whether or not such notions stand up to close critical scrutiny, more erudite researchers suggest that the polite historiography of David Hume and William Robertson was cunningly designed to consolidate the Union of 1707 in the hearts and minds of readers on either side of the Scottish border.<sup>37</sup> Mary Catharine

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see also Carter and Pittock, *Aberdeen*; Hook and Sher, *Glasgow*; K. Holcomb, “A Dance in the Mind: the Provincial Scottish Philosophical Societies”, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 21 (1991), 89–100.

<sup>35</sup> Kant’s essay “Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?” originally appeared in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in December 1784, in response to the question posed a year earlier in the same periodical; see A. Broadie (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology* (Edinburgh, 1997), 3–4. For reading in the German Enlightenment, see especially J. A. McCarthy, “The Art of Reading and the Goals of the German Enlightenment”, *Lessing Yearbook*, 16 (1984), 79–94; H. Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era (1770–1820): Determined Dilettantes* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> A. Herman, *The Scottish Enlightenment: the Scots’ Invention of the Modern World* (London, 2001), published in North America as *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe’s Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It* (New York, 2001); for discussion, see Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 18–9. For similar approaches, see Buchan, *Capital of the Mind*; R. W. Galvin, *America’s Founding Secret: What the Scottish Enlightenment taught out Founding Fathers* (Lanham, MD, 2002); “Age of Genius”, presented by Andrew Marr and first broadcast on BBC4 on Monday 12th June 2006, 9 p.m.–10 p.m.

<sup>37</sup> C. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689–c.1830* (Cambridge, 1993); K. O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997); J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion II: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge, 1999); M. Fearnley-Sander, “Philosophical History and the Scottish Reformation: William Robertson and the Knoxian Tradition”, *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), 323–38. For the ‘British’ context, see L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1992).

Moran demonstrates that the Scottish *literati* thought very carefully about the audiences they intended to reach. She suggests that Lord Monboddo was the exception that proved the rule, deliberately choosing *Antient Metaphysics* as a title which "so far from alluring readers, will frighten many from opening the book".<sup>38</sup> More recently, Richard Sher's majestic *The Enlightenment and the Book* delineates the full array of physical means by which authors and publishers sought to manage their readers, including portraiture, anonymous publication and complex paratextual devices.<sup>39</sup>

As Sher himself acknowledges, however, modern research into the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment and the texts in which they were inscribed has so far been conducted "with little or no reference to...the reading public that consumed them".<sup>40</sup> Though insisting that the Scottish *literati* wanted to change the society in which they lived and cared very much about how they were read, modern scholarship has largely ignored the degree to which they were successful in reaching sympathetic audiences – at least in Scotland.<sup>41</sup> After all, Stephen Colclough reminds us that "readers were free to ignore or misread the protocols that authors and publishers hoped would direct them", while David Allan has recently delineated the ways, many of them entirely unexpected, in which the very books which interest us here were assimilated and appropriated by readers in Georgian England.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> M. C. Moran, "From Rudeness to Refinement: Gender, Genre and Scottish Enlightenment Discourse" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The John Hopkins University, 1999); Monboddo's view of his own book is quoted on 108.

<sup>39</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*.

<sup>40</sup> Sher, "Science and Medicine", 113.

<sup>41</sup> The impact of the Scottish Enlightenment in Europe and America has been better served, although the focus tends to be on formal responses issued by other authors: see K. E. Carpenter, *The Dissemination of The Wealth of Nations in French and in France, 1776–1843* (New York, 2002); Richard Whatmore, "Adam Smith's Role in the French Revolution", *Past and Present*, 175 (2002), 65–89; S. Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception among the American Founders 1776–1790", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 19 (2002), 897–924; D. S. Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York, 1971); Sher and Smitten (eds.), *Scotland and America*; N. Waszek, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of "Civil Society"* (Dordrecht, 1988); M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany 1768–1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Kingston, Ont., 1987); F. Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 1995); L. Kontler, "William Robertson and his German Audience on European and Non-European Civilisations", *Scottish Historical Review*, 80 (2001).

<sup>42</sup> S. Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (Basingstoke, 2007), 13. D. Allan, *Making British Culture: English Readers and the Scottish Enlightenment, 1740–1830* (Abingdon, 2008); see also D. Allan, "Some Notes

In turning our attention away from the producers of Enlightenment in Scotland to consider instead the experiences of readers such as George Ridpath, we might learn a great deal more about how the Scottish Enlightenment should be defined, illuminating the impact made by certain books and ideas on people's lives, values and habits of mind.

This expectation underpins much of the best recent work on the continental Enlightenment. Thomas Munck's "comparative social history" of *The Enlightenment* (2000), which draws together recent contributions in French, German and the Scandinavian languages as well as in English, is entirely predicated on the express belief "that changes in attitudes and beliefs during the eighteenth century can be studied at least as fruitfully from the vantage point of more ordinary people". Such research shows that Enlightenment was "not merely an elite intellectual pastime, but a real process of emancipation from inherited values and beliefs".<sup>43</sup> Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre* (1984), a pioneering investigation into the cultural and intellectual lives of ordinary Frenchmen in the eighteenth century, is particularly relevant in this regard – demonstrating that at least one reader, the merchant Jean Ranson, attempted to live his life by the precepts laid down by Rousseau. Placing particular emphasis on the way Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) influenced Ranson's approach to fatherhood, Darnton argues that "Ranson did not read in order to enjoy the literature but to cope with life and especially family life, exactly as Rousseau intended".<sup>44</sup> Darnton's influential conclusion is that "reading and living, construing texts and making sense of life" were far more closely related in the eighteenth century than they are today, and he presents a convincing case for the broader historical significance of the reading experience:

Think how often reading has changed the course of history – Luther's reading of Paul, Marx's reading of Hegel, Mao's reading of Marx. Those points stand out in a deeper, vaster process – man's unending effort to find meaning in the world around him and within himself. If we could

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and Problems in the History of Reading: Georgian England and the Scottish Enlightenment", *Journal of the Historical Society*, 3 (2003), 91–214.

<sup>43</sup> T. Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative and Social History 1721–1794* (London, 2000), vii, viii.

<sup>44</sup> R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), 241; see also, idem., *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (London and New York, 1990); idem., *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA, 1982). On Darnton, see H. T. Mason (ed.), *The Darnton Debate: Books and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998).

understand how he has read, we could come closer to understanding how he made sense of life; and in that way, the historical way, we might even satisfy some of our own craving for meaning.<sup>45</sup>

This may be so, but recovering historical reading – an act that another leading practitioner of the history of reading, Roger Chartier, admits “only rarely leaves traces..., is scattered in an infinity of singular acts, and...easily shakes off all constraints” – is by no means a straightforward process.<sup>46</sup> Darnton himself has suggested a number of potential approaches, and his concept of “a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher...the printer, the bookseller and the reader” has been especially influential in helping to incorporate a nascent history of reading into the more established discipline of book history.<sup>47</sup> Historians of reading have borrowed extensively from reader response theory, adding empirical depth to the theorists’ near-impenetrable deliberations regarding whether the text or the reader determines meaning.<sup>48</sup> A number of pioneering researchers (often

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<sup>45</sup> R. Darnton, “First Steps Toward a History of Reading”, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 23: 1 (1986), 6, 25. For the wider historiographical context, see Ian Jackson, “Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain”, *The Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 1041–54; J. Raven, “New Reading Histories, Print Culture and the Identification of Change: The Case of Eighteenth-Century England”, *Social History*, 23 (1998), 268–87.

<sup>46</sup> R. Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (trans. L. G. Cochrane; Cambridge, 1994), 1–2.

<sup>47</sup> Darnton, *Kiss*, 111. Stimulated largely by pioneers like Darnton and Chartier, recent work in book history has tended to concentrate on questions of reader reception and audience response. Historiographical surveys of the field include J. P. Feather, “The Book in History and the History of the Book”, *Journal of Library History*, 21 (1986), 12–26; D. D. Hall, “The History of the Book: New Questions? New Answers?”, *Journal of Library History*, 21 (1986), 27–38.

<sup>48</sup> H. R. Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (trans., M. Shaw; Minneapolis, 1982); idem., *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* (trans. T. Bahti, Minneapolis, 1982); W. Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (London, 1974); idem., *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London, 1978); S. Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA, 1980); S. R. Suleiman and I. Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, 1980). For provocative discussion of the relationship between the history of reading and reader response theory, see J. Rose, “How Historians Study Reader Response; or, What did Jo Think of *Bleak House*?”, in J. O. Jordon and R. L. Patten, *Literature in the Marketplace* (Cambridge, 1995), 195–212; idem., “Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences”, *JHL*, 53 (1992), 47–70; R. D. Hume, “Texts Within Contexts: Notes Toward a Historical Method”, *Philological Quarterly*, 71 (1992), 69–100.

working on earlier periods than our own) have hinted at what might be possible by recovering important aspects of the relationship that developed between certain readers and the texts they read, historicising the process by which meaning was created by each individual reader.<sup>49</sup>

The history of reading has so far remained rooted in the individual case study, however, with very few monographs moving beyond this historiographical impasse. This is particularly true for Britain in the eighteenth century, where case studies by John Brewer, Naomi Tadmor and David Allan have to date been far more convincing than longer book length studies.<sup>50</sup> Jan Fergus draws attention to this problem in *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, but focuses purely on the readership of novels (even though she admits at the outset that “the archives underline the relative insignificance of novels in provincial print culture”). Fergus ultimately remains sceptical about the possibility of recovering individual readers’ responses to books, but she confines her study to one very small part of the English Midlands and,

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<sup>49</sup> C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (trans. John and Anne Tedeschi, London, 1980); W. H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, 1995); K. Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (London, 2000); R. DeMaria Jr, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading* (Baltimore, 1997); idem., “Samuel Johnson and the Reading Revolution”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 16 (1992), 86–102; A. Grafton, “Is the History of Reading a Marginal Exercise?: Guillaume Bude and His Books”, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 91 (1997), 139–57; A. Grafton and L. Jardine, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy”, *Past and Present*, 129 (1990), 30–78.

<sup>50</sup> J. Brewer, “Reconstructing the Reader: Prescriptions, Texts and Strategies in Anna Larpen’s Reading”, in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), 222–45; N. Tadmor, “‘In the even my wife read to me’: Women, Reading and Household Life in the Eighteenth Century”, in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor, (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), 162–74; D. Allan, “Opposing Enlightenment: Revd Charles Peters’ Reading of the Natural History of Religion”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38 (2005), 301–21; idem., “A Reader Writes: Negotiating *The Wealth of Nations* in an Eighteenth-Century English Commonplace Book”, *Philological Quarterly* (2004), 207–33. Although mainly for other periods, the most significant book-length studies include J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2001); J. Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain, 1750–1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge, 1999); R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago, 1957); R. K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader, 1790–1820* (London, 1955); M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1981); D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000); H. Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge, 2005).

much more importantly, to only one type of source material (booksellers’ records).<sup>51</sup> Colclough is more optimistic about what historians of reading can achieve (largely because he casts the net far wider in his search for appropriate source materials), but his *Reading Communities* simply weaves together a series of periodically-defined case studies with little convincing effort to construct an overall narrative.<sup>52</sup>

William St Clair’s gargantuan *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, probably the most influential and certainly the most controversial book on British reading that covers our period, actually abandons the historical reader to his or her own idiosyncrasies – “since every act of reading is unique”. Instead, St Clair proposes a new “political economy” of reading, one that ties the social depth of any publishing phenomenon to a “tranching down” effect inherent in the market whereby books only become available to the masses when they become affordable. The scope and ambition of St Clair’s history of the accessibility of books in the Romantic period is certainly impressive, but our understanding of readers’ lives suffers from his tendency to generalise – sometimes on decidedly shaky ground, as we shall see. To take just one problem addressed in the current study, for instance, St Clair misrepresents the undoubted complexity of library provision asking “why the two different newly invented ways of financing collective reading, commercial renting and member-owned co-operatives, should have... coincided so exactly with cultural and gender divisions”.<sup>53</sup> This neat formula, as with many of St Clair’s observations when dealing with the personal experience of reading, simply does not fit much of the available evidence for Scotland.

To date, then, the history of reading has yet to reach true maturity, particularly in scholarship on eighteenth-century Britain. As a result some tremendously important problems regarding the cultural significance of reading remain to be resolved, problems that on closer inspection relate closely to recent debates about the social impact of the

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<sup>51</sup> J. Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006), 7, 244; see also J. Fergus, “Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England: The Customers of Samuel Clay’s Circulating Library and Bookshop in Warwick, 1770–1772”, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 78 (1984), 155–213.

<sup>52</sup> Colclough, *Consuming Texts*; the book was conceived as a research project to contribute data to the Open University’s *Reading Experience Database*, which was launched on the internet in July 2007 and is available on <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>.

<sup>53</sup> W. St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004), 401, 448. For my own analysis, see Chapters Two and Three.

Scottish Enlightenment. Chief amongst these is the “internal contradiction” that Roger Chartier positions at the heart of “people’s relationship with texts”:

On the one hand, every reader has to deal with an entire set of constraints and obligations. The author, the bookseller-publisher, the commentator and the censor all have an interest in keeping close control over the production of meaning and in making sure that the text they have written, published, glossed, or authorised will be understood with no possible deviation from their prescriptive will. On the other hand, reading, by definition, is rebellious and vagabond. Readers use infinite numbers of subterfuges to procure prohibited books, to read between the lines, and to subvert the lessons imposed on them.<sup>54</sup>

Few official constraints were imposed on the circulation of books in Scotland, so procuring the books of the Scottish Enlightenment may not have been as subversive as Chartier imagines for the readers that populate this study.<sup>55</sup> But beyond the basic question of how many Scots could actually read in this period,<sup>56</sup> no one has yet attempted to uncover anything about “people’s relationship with texts” in Scotland at a time when Scottish-authored books were conquering the intellectual world. Indeed, the “internal contradiction” posited by Chartier may well have been particularly intense for Scottish readers in the second half of the eighteenth century because powerful forces – often intimately bound up with the Scottish Enlightenment – were competing to manipulate or inform their encounters with books. Perhaps most significantly, as we shall see, the Scottish Enlightenment advocated a particular type of

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<sup>54</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, viii.

<sup>55</sup> On censorship in eighteenth-century Britain, see Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 3–4, 148–9; R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> This basic question may well underpin any study of reading, but it is by no means uncontroversial. For competing views of literacy rates in eighteenth-century Scotland, see A. Murdoch, “Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland”, in W. McDougall and S. W. Brown (eds.), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland Volume II: 1707–1800* (forthcoming, Edinburgh University Press); D. J. Witherington, “Schooling, Literacy and Education”, in T. M. Devine, and R. Mitchison (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland Volume 1 1760–1830* (Edinburgh, 1988), 169–99; R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1985); idem., “The Literacy Myth? Illiteracy in Scotland 1630–1760”, *Past and Present*, 96 (1982), 81–102; T. C. Smout, “Born again at Cambuslang: New Evidence on Popular Religion and Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland”, *Past and Present*, 97 (1982), 114–27; and D. Cressy, “Literacy in Context: Meaning and Measurement in Early Modern England”, in J. Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), 305–19.



reading, with the emphasis put on critical judgement and good taste by writers as varied as David Hume, Adam Smith, Francis Hutcheson, George Campbell and James Beattie. The period also witnessed the rapid expansion of the periodical press, always dominated by London, but with later offshoots across the British Isles (including established newspapers in Perth, Dumfries and Kelso), as an industry founded on its ability to influence consumers' choices and by inference their reading experiences.<sup>57</sup>

Other less tangible factors were at play in eighteenth-century Scotland that may have encouraged provincial readers to appropriate what they read for themselves, rebelling against critical culture and subverting the meanings intended for them by the Scottish *literati*.<sup>58</sup> These certainly included the ongoing difficulties of reconstructing Scottish identity in the newly-forged 'British' framework created by the Union of Scotland and England in 1707 – a process in which leading Enlightenment writers hoped to play a fundamental role.<sup>59</sup> Closely related to this was the problem of Jacobitism, which constituted a very real political threat to the Hanoverian regime for at least fifteen years after its apparently final defeat at Culloden in 1746, and probably persisted amongst an embittered minority in certain areas until the 1780s.<sup>60</sup> Another consequence of Union was that Scotland shared in the "progressive globalization of European commerce", and Scots from many

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<sup>57</sup> For the history of the Scottish press in its wider British context, see M. E. Craig, *The Scottish Periodical Press, 1750–1789* (Edinburgh, 1931).

<sup>58</sup> The best recent surveys of eighteenth-century Scotland include Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*; Bruce Lenman, "From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise Reform of 1832", in R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (eds.), *The New Penguin History of Scotland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 2002); T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999); Bruce P. Lenman, *Integration and Enlightenment, Scotland 1746–1832* (London, 1981; 2nd edn; Edinburgh, 1992); N. T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970; 2nd edn, 1996).

<sup>59</sup> See, for instance, T. C. Smout, "Problems of Nationalism, Identity and Improvement in Later Eighteenth-Century Scotland", in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Improvement and Enlightenment: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1987–1988* (Edinburgh, 1988), 1–21; idem., "Perspectives on the Scottish Identity", *Scottish Affairs*, 6 (1994), 101–13; Colin Kidd, "North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms", *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 361–82. The wider perspective is provided by Colley, *Britons*.

<sup>60</sup> The literature is vast and not always convincing; for recent highlights, see Bruce P. Lenman, *The Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen, 1650–1784* (Aberdeen, 1995); idem., *The Jacobite Cause* (Glasgow, 1986); D. Szechi, *The Jacobites, Britain, and Europe, 1688–1788* (Manchester, 1994).

different walks of life suddenly had to come to terms with a much wider world: commercially, militarily and intellectually – a phenomenon witnessed first-hand by the Kirkcaldy customs official, Adam Smith.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps most importantly, as the Union negotiators had themselves recognised, Scotland was still a deeply religious county at the start of the eighteenth century. The Scottish Kirk took an unusually prominent role in fermenting and promoting Enlightenment in Scotland, as we have already mentioned, but also became increasingly fragmented as the rise of Evangelicalism spread through provincial parishes.<sup>62</sup>

That such compelling factors governed the behaviour and thought processes of so many provincial Scots in this period makes it as good a place as any to investigate more generally the relationship that developed between books and their readers – to ask how far readers brought pre-existing values, beliefs and professional obligations to bear in appropriating books for their own ends, and how effectively their responses were manipulated or constrained by the formidable instruments of critical culture. Although this book is primarily concerned with the circulation and social impact of the books of the Scottish Enlightenment in provincial Scotland, then, it can also address – at least for these books, at this time and in this place – the “dialectic between imposition and appropriation, between constraints transgressed and freedoms bridled” that Chartier calls “the first aim of a history of reading”.<sup>63</sup>

The structure of this book has been designed with this framework in mind, with Part I revolving around the means by which Scottish Enlightenment books were encountered in provincial Scotland and Part II assessing how contemporary readers responded to them. Chapter One maps the circulation of Scottish Enlightenment books in provincial Scotland by means of an aggregate analysis of 400 surviving

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<sup>61</sup> The phrase is Lenman's, “From the Union”, 350; the wider debate has recently been enlivened by Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2001); T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600–1815* (London, 2003). The relationship between Scottish trade and the Scottish Enlightenment is explored in J. A. Gherity, “Adam Smith and the Glasgow Merchants”, *History of Political Economy*, 24 (1992), 357–68.

<sup>62</sup> Sher, *Church and University*; John R. McIntosh, *Church and Theology in Enlightenment Scotland: the Popular Party, 1740–1800* (East Linton, 1998); Callum Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730* (London, 1987); idem., *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Friars: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, 1989).

<sup>63</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, viii.

private library catalogues. It thereby introduces the books that constitute the main focus of this study (reflecting the full range of modern interpretations outlined in this Introduction, rather than privileging any single definition of the Scottish Enlightenment), while asking why certain books tended to recur so often in private libraries. Chapter Two takes up this important question more directly by assessing the role of critical culture in shaping personal consumption at book clubs and subscription libraries, primarily through case studies of two libraries whose borrowing records are still extant. While some Scottish Enlightenment books were received very enthusiastically at most provincial subscription libraries, such institutions also allowed readers to engage more actively in the famously sociable and polite intellectual culture of the metropolitan Enlightenment. It is the positive contribution to intellectual culture that was made by commercial circulating libraries (more usually condemned for allowing women to indulge their frivolous taste in immoral novels) that provides the focus for Chapter Three. The final chapter in Part I, Chapter Four, offers a detailed comparative analysis of the borrowing records of five community libraries – namely, the Dumfries Presbytery Library (associated with the Church of Scotland) and the School Wynd Library of Dundee (belonging to a local congregation of the United Association Secession Church) and the charitable endowed libraries at Innerpeffray, Dunblane and Haddington. Most of them loaned books for little or no fee to a wide cross-section of provincial society, thereby demonstrating that some of the most challenging books of the Scottish Enlightenment could indeed be encountered by readers quite far down the social scale.

Of course, to show that readers had the opportunity to read a specific book is not to prove that they ever actually read it. Nor is it to demonstrate why they read it, whether they understood it, or how they responded to its ideas. In Part II, therefore, attention turns to source material that illuminates the reading experience itself. Accordingly, Chapter Five assesses the various means by which historians can recover historical reading experiences, considering the strengths and weaknesses of diaries, literary correspondence, marginalia and commonplace books. In the process, it reveals in more detail the influence of external factors on personal encounters with books, especially those associated with the rise of critical reading as propagated by periodical reviews and Scottish Enlightenment belletrists alike. Chapter Six explores more closely the ways in which a range of ideas and values

associated with the Scottish Enlightenment were assimilated by contemporary readers in their attempts to formulate and consolidate personal identities, paying close attention to the degree of autonomous reflection and critical judgement evident in their reading notes. Chapters Seven and Eight look instead at readers' challenges to the Scottish Enlightenment, asking how far pre-existing political and religious beliefs encouraged readers to fashion new meanings from the books they read. These chapters argue that provincial readers developed their own brand of Enlightenment, which was distinct in a number of important ways from that produced by the Edinburgh *literati*.

The wider implications of such reading experiences are taken up in the Conclusion, which considers more directly the role of reading and readers in the Enlightenment – in provincial Scotland, as in other parts of eighteenth-century Europe. In enlisting and manipulating Scottish ideas for their own purposes, provincial readers were fulfilling a key concern of the Enlightenment – exercising their own judgement in questioning themselves and the world around them, constructing their own enlightened identities and, to paraphrase Kant's celebrated motto, daring to think for themselves.<sup>64</sup> In David Hume's influential account "Of Refinement in the Arts",

The spirit of the age affects all the arts; and the minds of men, being once roused from their lethargy, and put into a fermentation, turn themselves on all sides, and carry improvements into every art and science. Profound ignorance is totally banished, and men enjoy the privilege of rational creatures, to think as well as to act, to cultivate the pleasures of the mind as well as those of the body.<sup>65</sup>

As will already be evident, however, before we can consider reading such elaborate meaning into individual readers' experiences it will be necessary to show that Scottish readers could get hold of the books that formed its principal achievement. It is therefore to the material diffusion of the books of the Scottish Enlightenment that we turn in Part I.

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<sup>64</sup> Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", 54.

<sup>65</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 271.

PART ONE

ENCOUNTERING ENLIGHTENMENT



## CHAPTER ONE

### “ONE OF THE GREATEST ORNAMENTS TO A GENTLEMAN”: PRIVATE LIBRARIES

The question of how deeply the Enlightenment penetrated contemporary society is not a new one. As long ago as 1910, the pioneering *Annales* historian, Daniel Mornet, surveyed 500 eighteenth-century private library catalogues to provide quantitative evidence for the circulation of Enlightenment books in provincial French society.<sup>1</sup> Though strongly contested in the century since, Mornet's conclusions were stunning: many core texts of the French Enlightenment returned a remarkably low score, particularly Rousseau's *Social Contract*, which he found in only one library catalogue in his entire sample. If the books that contemporary Frenchmen owned were any guide, therefore, Mornet suggested that the Enlightenment may not have been as central to the fermentation and progress of the French Revolution as had previously been thought.<sup>2</sup> Although Mornet's contribution is now generally seen as overly naïve, even his staunchest critics have recognised the analytical value of book catalogues, not least Roger Chartier, who insists that

The books owned by émigrés and condemned persons that were confiscated by the revolutionary authorities after 1792 attest to the strong and durable attachment to the philosophical corpus on the part of victims or enemies of the Revolution. What they read was not fundamentally different from the reading matter of the most deeply committed revolutionaries.<sup>3</sup>

David Lundberg and Henry F. May's attempt “to develop statistical information on the reception in America of certain major authors of the European Enlightenment” is even more suggestive in its direct concern with a range of significant Scottish *literati*.<sup>4</sup> They find that Hugh

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<sup>1</sup> Darnton, *Literary Underground*, 167–77 (quote from 168).

<sup>2</sup> Darnton explores the reception of Rousseau in late eighteenth-century France by a quite different route in *Great Cat Massacre*.

<sup>3</sup> R. Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (trans. L. G. Cochrane; London, 1991), 85.

<sup>4</sup> David Lundberg and Henry F. May, “The Enlightened Reader in America”, *American Quarterly*, 28 (1976), 262; H. F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (Oxford, 1976).

Blair “achieves immediate and striking popularity” in the book catalogues of post-revolutionary America and that in the case of Hume’s *History*, “‘correct and graceful style’ could weigh heavily even in conjunction with deplorable opinions”.<sup>5</sup> Above all, they argue that the ‘Common Sense’ philosophers Thomas Reid, James Beattie and Dugald Stewart helped deliver the “triumph of moral and religious conservatism” in nineteenth-century American culture – wholly on the basis of the books that early Americans owned.<sup>6</sup>

These pioneering studies demonstrate that book catalogues, when taken in a broader perspective, can tell us a great deal about the relationship between the Scottish *literati* and their immediate reading public in contemporary Scotland. The methodology on which they depend is by no means uncontroversial, however, since book ownership does not necessarily reflect what a person actually read – as the ubiquity of the modern day ‘coffee-table’ book makes abundantly clear. As Robert Darnton explains with inimitable good sense, “most of us would agree that a catalogue of a private library can serve as a profile of a reader, even though we don’t read all the books we own and we do read many books that we never purchase”.<sup>7</sup> This chapter considers the Scottish Enlightenment holdings of the 400 private library catalogues so far discovered to survive from eighteenth-century Scotland; but before their significance can be appreciated, we must first understand more fully the practical and conceptual problems inherent in this approach to studying the history of reading.

## I

Some problems can be easily dealt with. One of the principal criticisms of Lundberg and May’s study is that their analysis does not acknowledge the inevitable chronological distortions involved in comparing over a long period the relative popularity of books that appeared at different times.<sup>8</sup> Francis Hutcheson’s *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) can potentially appear in every catalogue in our dataset due to its early publication date, whereas a late

<sup>5</sup> Lundberg and May, “The Enlightened Reader”, 269, 271.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 270. Book ownership is also considered at length in Woolf, *Reading History*.

<sup>7</sup> Darnton, *Kiss*, 162. For the role of book catalogues in the wider field of book history, see Darnton, “First Steps” and Allan, “Some Notes and Problems”.

<sup>8</sup> M. G. Spencer, *Hume and Eighteenth-Century America* (Rochester, NY, 2005), 12–6.



work such as Dugald Stewart's *Philosophical Essays* can only appear in the much smaller proportion of catalogues that post-dated its publication in 1810. In attempting to compare their relative popularity it is necessary to present a more sophisticated analysis of the data than simply comparing the aggregate number of catalogues in which they appear (as Lundberg and May do). In fact, we need instead to present this aggregate figure as a percentage of catalogues that post-date each work's publication.<sup>9</sup> Through this statistical refinement, we can compare the relative popularity of works published at different times, showing in this instance that Stewart's *Philosophical Essays*, though it appeared in far fewer catalogues than Hutcheson's *Inquiry* in absolute terms (43 as opposed to 74), was actually found in a marginally greater proportion of catalogues after its publication – 21% of relevant libraries, as compared to 20%.

Even so, this adjustment cannot resolve a more fundamental problem posed by the very uneven rate of survival of catalogues from different periods. We have just five catalogues from the 1720s as opposed to 101 dating from the 1820s (see Table 1.1) – a dramatic contrast that severely limits the validity of the kind of straightforward chronological analysis conducted by Lundberg and May.<sup>10</sup> No matter how desirable it

Table 1.1. Chronological distribution of 400 surviving library catalogues (by decade)

1720s	5	1780s	25
1730s	6	1790s	37
1740s	11	1800s	43
1750s	11	1810s	66
1760s	21	1820s	101
1770s	15	1830s or later <sup>11</sup>	59

<sup>9</sup> Lundberg and May have Stewart's *Elements* (1792) in 17% of catalogues in their third period (1791–1800), and 12% overall. Hutcheson *Inquiry*, on the other hand, is assigned a score of 13% overall – on first sight, more than Stewart's *Elements*, even though it appeared in fewer catalogues after Stewart's *Elements* was published (16 compared to at least 34); "The Enlightened Reader", 274, 288.

<sup>10</sup> Lundberg and May break their sample down into four periods characterised by wildly varying periodisations and incomparable numbers of catalogues: 1700–1776 (92 catalogues); 1777–1790 (29); 1791–1800 (119); 1801–1813 (51); "The Enlightened Reader", 267–71.

<sup>11</sup> I have included a significant number of personal and family library catalogues compiled later than 1830 where it is likely that the collection was formed in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries.

might be to test the reception of important early works such as Hutcheson's *Inquiry* as they first emerged, this is clearly impossible with such an uneven survival rate.

This particular approach to the history of reading is inevitably skewed in other important ways. There was an obvious social bias in the ownership of books in eighteenth-century Britain as Richard Altick made clear in his pioneering study of the *English Common Reader* (1957), with books still affordable only "in a very restricted social context": a merchant's clerk "would have to choose between buying a newly published quarto volume and a good pair of breeches..., or between a volume of essays and a month's supply of tea and sugar".<sup>12</sup> For those many thousands of Scots who were too poor to own books in our period, book-ownership data is clearly irrelevant to any attempt to understand how (if at all) they experienced the Scottish Enlightenment through reading. Even further up the social scale, a record of the books a moderately affluent professional or landed proprietor owned can only go so far in describing their intellectual proclivities. One would ordinarily expect Robert Adam's *Ruins of Spalatro* (generally regarded as the architectural manifesto of the Scottish Enlightenment) to have featured in the personal library belonging to Edinburgh New Town designer James Craig, but Iain Gordon Brown points out that it was available only in "expensive folios, and Craig was not a rich man".<sup>13</sup> For Alexander Irvine, the eldest son of an impoverished Aberdeenshire laird training to be an advocate in Edinburgh and Glasgow around the turn of the century, books were a major financial commitment: the outlay of £2 16s on a collected edition of Thomas Reid's philosophical works constituted "a pretty large article" in his allowance, though he did not "regret having so valuable a book in my possession".<sup>14</sup>

It follows that there was also an inbuilt social bias in the type of collections that warranted the production of catalogues in the past, for "an

<sup>12</sup> Altick, *English Common Reader*, 41, 51–2; A. J. Gibson and T. C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland, 1550–1780* (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> I. G. Brown, "Craig's Library: A First Investigation", in K. Cruft and A. Fraser (eds.), *The Ingenious Architect of the New Town of Edinburgh, James Craig 1744–1795* (Edinburgh, 1995), 95; the original inventories are located at NAS CC8/10/51A and CC8/8/130, ff.261–73; For Robert Adam's significance, see I. G. Brown, *Monumental Reputation: Robert Adam and the Emperor's Palace* (Edinburgh, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> NLS Acc.9025, Literary Journal and Reading Digest of Alexander Irvine of Drum, 1800–1804, 15.

owner does not go to the trouble of making a catalogue of his library unless it is a relatively substantial collection that deserves a good record".<sup>15</sup> Rather than being a straightforward measure of reading tastes, then, the existence of a catalogue is in the first instance a gauge of the status of the library and above all, its owner. This fact is reflected in the breakdown of the social status of the library owners included in our dataset (Table 1.2), which features as many as 84 peers, knights,

Table 1.2. Breakdown of social status of library owners

Social status of library	Number of surviving library catalogues
Titled (including Peers, Baronets, Law Lords and Knights)	84
Gentry	77
Lawyers	34
Clergymen	32
Merchants	23
Medical Professionals	21
University Professors/Antiquarians	19
Manufacturers	14
Tradesmen	11
Military/Naval Officers	9
Bankers/Customs Officials	7
Women	6
Book Trade (including Printers, Booksellers and Newspaper Proprietors)	5
MPs	5
Schoolmasters	3
Architects	2
Farmers	2
Unknown	46
Total	400

<sup>15</sup> A. Taylor, *Book Catalogues: Their Varieties and Uses*, rev. by W. P. Barlow (Winchester, 1986), 1. Darnton agrees: "why should private libraries important enough to have printed catalogues be taken as an indication of a book's appeal to ordinary and impecunious readers?" *Literary Underground*, 168. Carlyle thought that "a Library is not worth anything without a catalogue; it is a Polyphemus without any eye in his head"; quoted in A. L. Humphreys, *The Private Library: What we do know; what we don't know; what we ought to know about our books* (London, 1897), 81–2.

law lords and baronets, and at least a further 77 owners who can safely be assigned to the landed gentry. Although our analysis includes owners who could be termed 'ordinary' readers (the professionals, merchants, manufacturers and traders, for instance), it also encompasses some of the most exceptional book collectors in the British Isles – most notably Archibald Campbell, 3rd Duke of Argyll, and his nephew, John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, upwardly mobile sections of the professional, mercantile and manufacturing communities were often barely distinguishable from their landed neighbours (and were often interlinked by marriage, education and outlook), and their cultural accoutrements (including books and libraries) were merely emblems of their wider political and social status. In short, their books were part of the paraphernalia that marked them out as members of the genteel elite.<sup>17</sup> Many individuals in our survey clearly blurred social distinctions by straddling the divide between successful merchant and landed proprietor – men such as Patrick Miller (1731–1815), whose business acumen facilitated his purchase of the Dalswinton estate, near Dumfries, in his fifties, or Henry Monteith (1765–1848), who built Carstairs House, Lanarkshire, in 1818 as an expression of the landed and political status he founded on a series of textile mills. By contrast, sources which enumerate the books that belonged to markedly less affluent owners simply do not survive frequently enough to allow us to assess adequately their

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<sup>16</sup> *Catalogus Librorum A.C.D.A.* (Glasgow, 1758); R. L. Emerson, "Catalogus Librorum A.C.D.A., or, The Library of Archibald Campbell, Third Duke of Argyll (1682–1761)", in P. Wood (ed.), *The Culture of the Book in the Scottish Enlightenment: An Exhibition* (Toronto, 2000), 13–39; *Catalogue of a Valuable and well-known Library* (London, 1785), with ms annotation "Ld Bute's Duplicates"; *A Catalogue of the Botanical and Natural History Part of the Library of the Late John, Earl of Bute* (London, 1794); *A Catalogue of a Select and Valuable Collection of Books... the Property of John Earl of Bute, deceased* (London, 1798). For the rise of book collecting in this period, see P. Connell, "Bibliomania: book collecting, cultural politics and the rise of literary heritage in Romantic Britain", *Representations*, 71 (2000), 24–47.

<sup>17</sup> For an illuminating discussion of this issue, see A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1998), who excludes the terms 'middle' and 'upper' class from her discussion of "women's lives in Georgian England": "In social and administrative terms, east Lancashire was dominated by landed gentry, polite professional and greater commercial families – a local elite who exhibited considerable cohesion... In addition to their shared role in administration, landed gentlemen, professional gentlemen and gentlemen merchants stood shoulder to shoulder on the grouse moor and riverbank", 31.

book preferences.<sup>18</sup> The bankrupted James Allan, merchant in Alloa, John MacAlpine, general merchant and trader in Fort William and John Wilson and sons, ironmasters in Lanarkshire, might all qualify as members of a broadly defined ‘middle class’, but even in these instances there are clear pointers that a pursuit of gentility through conspicuous consumption – since large libraries were a status symbol as well as a functional facility – actually contributed to their straightened circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

Beyond the various and inescapable distortions that are built into our sample, book catalogues are not necessarily as articulate, precise or even comprehensive as they appear to be on the surface. After all, compilers of catalogues tended to use short-hand, incorrect or eccentric titles, and they sometimes left out entirely the names of authors, making identification of the original works an often tortuous process. This is most problematic here when confronted with the entry “Hume’s Essays”, which could refer either to Hume’s original *Essays Moral and Political* (1741) or to his *Essays and Treatises* (1753). In this study, the two have been considered together because it is impossible to separate them in most Scottish catalogues after 1753, but as Mark Spencer makes clear in his admirable critique of Lundberg and May’s influential essay, the distinction is tremendously important. The *Essays and Treatises* actually served as a digest of Hume’s philosophical works in successive editions after 1753, giving readers access not just to the aforementioned *Essays Moral and Political*, but also to the *Principles of Morals, Enquiry on the Human Understanding, Political Discourses* and, from 1757, the *Four Dissertations*. The failure of Lundberg and May to acknowledge this, Spencer argues, makes their account of the poor reception of Hume’s philosophy in America “downright deceptive”.<sup>20</sup>

As the example of Hume’s *Essays* makes clear, catalogues can never address many of the more nebulous aspects of the reception of the Scottish Enlightenment, seriously limiting the usefulness of this

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<sup>18</sup> Wills and testaments so rarely include detailed book ownership data that I have not included them in this study; curatorial and tutorial inventories (associated with the inheritance of an estate by a minor) do sometimes include lists of books associated with a deceased landowner’s estate (NAS SC Sheriff Court Records); sequestration processes much more regularly include lists of books owned by bankrupt individuals (NAS CS96 Court of Session Records). On wills, see Woolf, *Reading History*, 132.

<sup>19</sup> NAS CS96/730, List of Books of James Allan, Alloa, 2 Dec. 1794; NAS CS96/162/1, Inventory of Effects of James Mac Alpine, Fort William, 1822; NAS CS96/436, Valuation Inventory of Mr. Wilson’s Books.

<sup>20</sup> Spencer, *Hume*, 13.

approach in other ways. For instance, there is usually no indication in these catalogues of which edition of a work appears in a library, making it impossible to distinguish between the reception of different versions of a work such as Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which evolved substantially during Smith's lifetime.<sup>21</sup> Catalogues do not usually recognise when texts were published in numbered parts, notably the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (held in 151 catalogues in the sample), one of the most distinctive productions of the Scottish Enlightenment, which was first released in 100 parts between 1768 and 1771.<sup>22</sup> Catalogues almost always record the contents of a library at a given moment in time, often constituting a snapshot of the books owned by a reader at the time of his or her death. They do not generally reveal how or when someone acquired an Enlightenment text; whether they did so in their youth as the work was hot off the press, inherited the book as an unwanted heirloom, or bought it second-hand in old age. Most importantly, catalogues are completely silent on those texts that were experienced purely through being extracted or serialized in magazines, journals and anthologies.<sup>23</sup> Although catalogues may reflect the distribution of particular journals (the *Scots Magazine* appeared in 26% of relevant libraries, for instance), they do not record instances where a reader's sole contact with a specific Scottish Enlightenment text was through reading a critical review of it. This means that any estimation of readership based on private library catalogues alone can only ever represent a minimum figure.<sup>24</sup>

Turning from books to identifiable readers, we must be equally wary of the "long-standing practice of salting named sales with indistinguishable other stock".<sup>25</sup> The sale of the collection built up over several

<sup>21</sup> For details of its publication history, see Smith, *TMS*, especially xv–xx.

<sup>22</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 230.

<sup>23</sup> "This method of publication undoubtedly accounted for the spread of many enlightened works"; Lundberg and May, "The Enlightened Reader", 264. On anthologies, see St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 66–83, 118, 445, 539–47. Blair's *Lectures* were "widely reprinted in school anthologies" according to P. H. Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading and Speech in the Age of Austen* (Stanford CA, 2002), 184.

<sup>24</sup> Critical reviews are reprinted in J. Reeder (ed.), *On Moral Sentiments: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith* (Bristol, 1997); I. S. Ross (ed.), *On the Wealth of Nations: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith* (Bristol, 1998); H. Mizuta (ed.), *Adam Smith: Critical Responses*, 6 vols. (London, 2000); S. Tweyman (ed.), *David Hume: Critical Assessments*, 6 vols. (London, 1995); J. Feiser, *Early Responses to Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Stewart*, 2 vols. (Bristol, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> D. McKitterick, "Book Catalogues: Their Varieties and Uses", in P. Davidson (ed.), *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography* (Cambridge, 1992), 166. 153 sale catalogues have been included in the survey.

generations by the Ferguson lairds of Pitfour in Aberdeenshire inadvertently reveals the extent of the problem, with the auctioneer taking pains to point out that “although duplicates, and in some instances, more than two copies of the same book appear in the following Catalogue, not a single volume has been introduced which did not belong to the Pitfour Library”.<sup>26</sup> But elsewhere, there are clear hints that the collection we have before us does not present a true picture of an individual’s holdings: *A Catalogue of Several Collections of Books Lately Purchased, including the Elegant and Valuable Library of the Late Lord Haddo* (offered for sale by the Aberdeen bookseller Alexander Angus in 1796), typically gave no indication which books belonged to the unfortunate Haddo and which did not, while Archibald Constable admitted in his sale catalogue for 1800 that “the greater number of these volumes were collected by Lord Covington” (but did not specify which volumes were not).<sup>27</sup> This raises a problem of a quite different nature, for it is often impossible to tell from a single catalogue which particular member of a family was responsible for selecting specific books for the library (especially if they had been available for several decades) – or indeed, which individuals read certain books in the collection.

Ultimately, the inescapable fact is that however clearly they appear to describe readers’ preferences in the past, catalogues actually say nothing at all about the *use* of books. Indeed, in the age of the ‘consumer revolution’, catalogues may well be much more appropriately viewed as evidence for a “prestigious form of conspicuous consumption” than as indicators of private reading.<sup>28</sup> The sheer size of some of the libraries in our dataset confirms this suspicion: the Earls of Marchmont and Minto owned around 4,700 and 7,600 volumes respectively,<sup>29</sup> when even Hume admitted that his own relatively modest collection of around

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<sup>26</sup> *Pitfour Library: Catalogue of the Library of the Late Lord Pitfour...*, of James Ferguson Esq. of Pitfour, M., and of Governor Ferguson of Pitfour... (Edinburgh, 1821), 1.

<sup>27</sup> *A Catalogue of a Very Valuable and Extensive Collection of Books ... the Property of two Eminent Collectors...* (Edinburgh, 1800), post-script; *Angus & Son Sale Catalogue for 1796: A Catalogue of several collections of books lately purchased, including the elegant and valuable library of the late Lord Haddo* (Aberdeen, 1796).

<sup>28</sup> Allan, “Some Notes and Problems”, 103. On consumerism in eighteenth-century Britain, the standard text is J. Brewer and A. Bermingham (eds.), *The Consumption of Culture, 1660–1800: Image, Object and Text* (London, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> NAS GD158/3000, *A Catalogue of the Right Honourable The Earl of Marchmont’s Library, 1776; Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Library of the Late Earl of Marchmont* (London, 1830); GCL \*08.26/E46/1810 (1810), \*08.26/M667/1825 (1825), \*08.26/M667/1829 (various dates), *Catalogues of the Minto Library*; A. Hunt, “Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania”, in *CHLB2*, 450.

400 books was “more than I can use”.<sup>30</sup> As our period progressed, the cultural status assigned to books helped the library itself emerge as “one of the greatest ornaments to a gentleman or his family”, according to an influential early architectural manual.<sup>31</sup> The unveiling of the newly redesigned library at The Doune, the seat of the Grant lairds of Rothiemurchus, thus became a major social occasion:

Our fête being remarkable by the opening of the library. The walls were distempered in French gray relieved by panelling in black. The bookcases, finished by handsome cornices, and very high, looked, when quite filled with books, very comfortable.<sup>32</sup>

With an individual's books so ostentatiously on public display for the critical inspection of his guests, a library catalogue might be more ready evidence for the influence of the critical reviewers than for the owner's own preferences, since “he now has to show that he has got all the right books, that is to say all the fashionable books, whether or not he has actually read them, or wants to read them” – a notion perhaps uncomfortably familiar to the modern reader, and one that will become increasingly important as this study progresses.<sup>33</sup> There were many more reasons why particular books turned up in libraries that plainly had little to do with personal reading preferences. Authors would frequently present their close friends and relatives (not to mention patrons) with books, so that Craig possessed no less than eight editions of the poetic works of his revered uncle Thomson.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, land-owners often demonstrated their support for local authors by buying

<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Norton and Norton, *Hume Library*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Coke (1715) quoted by N. Barker, *Treasures from the Libraries of National Trust Country Houses* (New York, 1999), 16; C. Wainwright, “The Library as living room”, in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds.), *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620–1920* (Winchester, 1991), 15–24.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (Edinburgh, 1998), 1: 302; for the private library as tourist attraction, see Ian Gow, “‘The most learned drawing room in Europe?': Newhailes and the classical Scottish library”, in Deborah C. Myers, Michael S. Moss and Miles K. Ogleshorpe (eds.), *Visions of Scotland's Past* (East Linton, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> T. A. Birrell, “Reading as Pastime: the Place of Light Literature in some Gentlemen's Libraries of the Seventeenth Century”, in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds.), *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620–1920* (Winchester, 1991), 129. Birrell contends that “After the seventeenth century, you do not need to study the library catalogues to learn about reading habits – that can be done by studying the reviews. Private library catalogues, from the eighteenth century onwards, are primarily only a guide to collecting habits”, 128–9. See P. Kaufman, “Two Eighteenth-Century Guides to the Choice of Books”, *LH*, 1 (1969), 146–52.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, “Craig's Library”, 93.



up copies of their books, explaining Roxburghe's five copies of Ridpath's *Border History*, or the two copies of Shaw's *History of the Province of Moray* (1775) still held by the Brodie Castle Library.<sup>35</sup> Finally, there are undoubtedly libraries in our sample that might better be described as professional rather than private – a vocational collection of books which were of use to a lawyer, doctor or clergyman in going about his daily business. In the minutes recording the sequestration of the estate of John MacAndrew, a bankrupt solicitor, printer and publisher in Inverness, it is noted that “Mr. Campbell as representing the firm of MacAndrew and Campbell claims retention of the law books as being in his possession”. Thus, some of MacAndrew's books, including John Erskine's *An Institute of the Law of Scotland* (1773) and Lord Kames's *Historical Law-Tracts* (1758), were claimed by MacAndrew's legal partner as the rightful property of their firm rather than forming part of his private collection.<sup>36</sup>

The fundamental problem with catalogues, then, is that they tell us very little about the meaning or practice of reading in the past. Surviving private library catalogues may demonstrate that certain people or families owned the books of the Scottish Enlightenment, but this does not constitute proof that those books were ever read – and as Lundberg and May understatedly remark, “we may assume that...some were read more intensively than others.”<sup>37</sup> We buy books for many reasons, to enlighten ourselves certainly, but also to meet a particular professional or personal need, to construct an image of ourselves that we want to present to the world (or to ourselves), to entertain and divert us in the bedroom or the bathroom – or simply to display on our coffee tables.

Nevertheless, book catalogues do provide a general sense of the cultural landscape. Consumers of books in eighteenth-century Scotland formed in the first instance a part of the material and financial crutch of the Scottish *literati*, and whether or not they read them the men and women who bought the works of Hume, Smith, Robertson et al were still involved in a very real sense in sustaining the Scottish

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<sup>35</sup> New York PL, \*KAC (Roxburghe), *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Duke of Roxburghe* (London, 1812); B. Hillyard, “John Kerr, 3rd Duke of Roxburghe (1740–1804)”, in W. Baker and K. Womack (eds.), *Pre-Nineteenth-Century British Book Collectors and Bibliographers* (London, 1999); personal search of Brodie Castle Library, National Trust for Scotland.

<sup>36</sup> NASCS96/168, Act sequestrating the whole estate and effects of John MacAndrew, Inverness, 1831.

<sup>37</sup> Lundberg and May, “The Enlightened Reader”, 264.

Enlightenment.<sup>38</sup> More importantly, our particular concern for the reception of these books in provincial Scotland makes it essential to try to estimate the extent to which they circulated beyond Edinburgh. Unlike sources that historians usually use to judge the popularity of books in the past, including computerised bibliographies such as the *English Short-Title Catalogue* (which are too non-specific to trace regionally-defined readerships) and booksellers' records (which survive too rarely in Scotland to provide a comprehensive picture), catalogues allow us to map both the geographical and social distribution of the works that concern us.<sup>39</sup> While we must therefore exercise great caution in claiming too much on their behalf, book catalogues can be of value alongside sources that allow us to explore the 'hows' and 'whys' of individual reading experiences, laying the groundwork for a more detailed study of Scottish reading in the age of Enlightenment.

## II

With these ends in mind, Table 1.3 presents the 51 titles of the Scottish Enlightenment that appear in 20% or more of the surviving private library catalogues. Needless to say, the catalogues indicate significant holdings of other types of books and there were few substantial private libraries in Georgian Scotland that did not include Henry Fielding's novels, James Cook's *Voyages* or the *Monthly Review*. Most revealingly, the books of the continental Enlightenment also found a ready readership beyond the Scottish *literati*. Montesquieu's *L'Esprit* was listed in 166 catalogues and Buffon's *Natural History* in 121, while the collected

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<sup>38</sup> For an account of the profits made by Scottish Enlightenment authors, see Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 240–1 and 308 on Hume; 245–7 on Blair; and 201, 214, 259–60 and 282 on Robertson.

<sup>39</sup> The *English Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC) is available online at <http://estc.bl.uk>. Both types of sources are assessed in J. Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven, 2007). Little work has yet been published on the provincial booktrade in Scotland, but see F. A. Black, "Book Distribution to the Scottish and Candian Provinces, 1750–1820: Examples of Methods and Availability", in P. Isaac and B. McKay (eds.), *The Reach of Print: Making, Selling and Using Books* (London, 1998), 103–20; W. McDougall, "Scottish Books for America in the Mid-Eighteenth Century", in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds.), *Spreading the Word: The Distribution Networks of Print, 1550–1800* (Winchester, 1990), 21–46. For the early period, see A. J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade 1500–1720* (East Linton, 2000).

Table 1.3. Scottish Enlightenment titles in at least 20% of relevant libraries

Author, <i>title</i>	Percentage of post-publication libraries
David Hume, <i>History of England</i> (1754)	67
William Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i> (1759)	60
Robert Burns, <i>Poems</i> (1786)	57
Adam Smith, <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (1776)	56
William Robertson, <i>History of the Reign of Charles V</i> (1769)	55
Hugh Blair, <i>Sermons</i> (1777)	53
Tobias Smollett, <i>Humphrey Clinker</i> (and other novels; from 1748)	50
William Robertson, <i>History of America</i> (1777)	50
James Macpherson, <i>Works of Ossian</i> (1765)	47
Tobias Smollett, <i>Complete History of England</i> (1758)	45
William Robertson, <i>Historical Disquisition on India</i> (1791)	44
David Hume, <i>Essays Moral and Political/Essays and Treatises</i> (1741/1753)	44
Hugh Blair, <i>Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres</i> (1783)	44
<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i> (1768)	42
William Guthrie, <i>Geographical Grammar</i> (1770)	36
Adam Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> (1759)	35
William Buchan, <i>Domestic Medicine</i> (1769)	35
Lord Hailes, <i>Annals of Scotland</i> (1776)	34
Adam Ferguson, <i>Essay on the History of Civil Society</i> (1767)	32
Lord Kames, <i>Sketches of the History of Man</i> (1774)	31
James Beattie, <i>Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth</i> (1770)	31
Adam Ferguson, <i>History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic</i> (1783)	31
Lord Kames, <i>Elements of Criticism</i> (1762)	30
Sir John Sinclair, <i>Statistical Account of Scotland</i> (1791)	30
Henry Mackenzie and others, <i>The Mirror</i> (1779)	29
James Boswell, <i>Life of Samuel Johnson</i> (1791)	28
Henry Mackenzie and others, <i>The Lounger</i> (1785)	28
Thomas Reid, <i>Inquiry into the Human Mind</i> (1764)	28
James Ferguson, <i>Astronomy Explained upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles</i> (1756)	26

Table 1.3 (Cont.)

Author, title	Percentage of post-publication libraries
Sir John Dalrymple, <i>Memoirs of the History of Great Britain and Ireland</i> (1771)	26
Robert Watson, <i>Philip II</i> (1777)	25
Hugo Arnot, <i>History of Edinburgh</i> (1779)	25
George Campbell, <i>Dissertation on Miracles</i> (1762)	24
Henry Mackenzie, <i>Man of Feeling</i> (1771)	23
Robert Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i> (1771)	22
Malcolm Laing, <i>History of Scotland</i> (1800)	22
Lord Kames, <i>Historical Law-Tracts</i> (1758)	22
William Smellie, <i>Philosophy of Natural History</i> (1790)	22
Thomas Reid, <i>Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man</i> (1785)	21
James Bruce, <i>Travels to the Source of the Nile</i> (1790)	21
Dugald Stewart, <i>Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind</i> (1792)	21
Thomas Reid, <i>Essays on the Active Powers of Man</i> (1788)	21
William Wilkie, <i>The Epigoniad</i> (1757)	21
Henry Mackenzie, <i>Man of the World</i> (1773)	21
Archibald Alison, <i>Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste</i> (1790)	21
Dugald Stewart, <i>Philosophical Essays</i> (1810)	21
Henry Mackenzie, <i>Julia Roubigne</i> (1777)	20
John Gillies, <i>History of Ancient Greece</i> (1786)	20
Francis Hutcheson, <i>Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue</i> (1725)	20
James Fordyce, <i>Sermons to Young Women</i> (1766)	20
William Tytler, <i>Historical and Critical Enquiry into the Evidence Against Mary Queen of Scots</i> (1760)	20

works of Rousseau and Voltaire were nearly as widely distributed in Scottish country house libraries as the works of Hume and Robertson. This study considers the circulation of a specific body of literature in provincial Scotland, however, so the focus here remains principally on the distribution of books associated with the Scottish Enlightenment – broadly conceived to consider the full range of recent interpretations outlined in the Introduction.

A number of general patterns are immediately evident. Most striking, perhaps, is the number of authors with multiple titles in the list, reflecting what Richard Sher rightly diagnoses as “the public’s tendency to classify books by their authors as brand names”.<sup>40</sup> According to the book catalogues, William Robertson was the most bankable brand name in the Scottish Enlightenment, with four titles all found in at least 44% of libraries, although the novelist and moralist Henry Mackenzie was not far behind, with his three novels complemented by the multi-authored *Mirror* and *Lounger* periodicals in which he had a major stake. Philosopher Thomas Reid and judge Henry Home, Lord Kames, both wrote three books on this list, while Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson, David Hume, Dugald Stewart and Adam Smith each boasted two works on the list. Tobias Smollett was a special case; his novels appear so often in contemporary catalogues in collected editions that it is impossible to distinguish between them, though they almost certainly contributed to the popularity of his otherwise unremarkable *Complete History of England*. The book catalogues also reflect the sense in which the Scottish Enlightenment cannot entirely be reduced to a list of books published by single authors, especially in the prominence of the multi-authored *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, to which many enlightened Scots contributed without ever writing a book of their own.

By comparing the ownership data with Sher’s measurement of the popularity of the same titles in his monumental *The Enlightenment and the Book* (2006), derived principally from the number of editions published in England and Scotland and the size of print runs, we also get a general sense of the relative value of the catalogues themselves.<sup>41</sup> Our list includes 24 works which Sher characterises as “bestsellers” (10 or more editions), including the 17 found most frequently in the surviving library catalogues. Their overwhelming presence on contemporary bookshelves obviates some of the more trenchant criticisms of Sher’s approach, confirming that the Scottish Enlightenment as a cultural force can indeed be reduced to a select number of bestselling books published between the 1750s and around 1790.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, alongside two “strong sellers” (7–9 editions) and twelve more “good sellers”

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<sup>40</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 94.

<sup>41</sup> For Sher’s categorization of popularity, see *Enlightenment and the Book*, 88–94, 701.

<sup>42</sup> See especially Roger L. Emerson, “Review Essay: Richard Sher’s Bookish Scottish Enlightenment”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 33 (2009), 61–6.

(4–6 editions), our list features ten “modest sellers” from Sher’s database (works which had two or three editions before 1820) and even includes one work he designates a “poor seller”, William Smellie’s *Philosophy of Natural History* (deemed so because it only ever appeared in one edition in Britain, although it was reprinted many times in the United States in the nineteenth century).<sup>43</sup> Although Sher insists that books in these last two categories “never enjoyed widespread popularity”, with few of them securing “lasting fame in the republic of letters”,<sup>44</sup> the book catalogues tell a rather different story for the Scottish market. Authors whose books had a relatively unimpressive publishing history across Britain as a whole – Lord Kames, Adam Ferguson, Robert Henry and Thomas Reid to name but a few from this list – enjoyed a disproportionately high circulation in their native Scotland on the basis of the library catalogues that have survived.

According to the catalogues, by far the most widely distributed book of the Scottish Enlightenment on contemporary bookshelves was David Hume’s *History of England*, dispelling the long-standing myth of this work’s unpopularity – despite the undoubted scope for controversy and misreading in Hume’s treatment of certain subjects.<sup>45</sup> While it quickly became established as an indispensable component of gentry and aristocratic libraries, a truer measure of the sheer ubiquity of Hume’s *History* is the number of times it appeared in very small personal collections. Inventories compiled as part of bankruptcy proceedings confirm that it was owned by William Munro (a cattle dealer from Achany in the Highlands), Duncan Chisholm (solicitor and leather merchant in Inverness), John Surtees (iron founder in Markinch), John MacVicar (bleacher in Kierfield, Stirlingshire), David Stephens (trunkmaker in Edinburgh) and John Sorley (ironmonger in Glasgow) amongst very many others – in every case, the only Scottish Enlightenment title these men owned. In all, 48% of merchants and 65% of lawyers represented in the dataset owned Hume’s *History*, as well as two-thirds of all clergymen and medical practitioners, suggesting that Hume’s *History* was

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<sup>43</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 90, 674.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>45</sup> J. B. Black, *The Art of History: a study of four great historians of the eighteenth century* (1926; New York, 1965), 83. The lavishly printed library catalogue of Kinfauns Castle (1828) reports of Hume’s *History* that “It is a singular fact in the History of Literature that during the first twelve month after the publication of the first division of this work, only FORTY FIVE copies were sold!”; NLS H.11.a.21, *Catalogue of the Gray Library, Kinfauns Castle* (Kinfauns, 1828). Hume’s *History* appeared in 44% of American catalogues in Lundberg and May, “The Enlightened Reader”, 282.

standard issue for these upwardly-mobile members of provincial society in Scotland.

The same was probably true, although to a less startling degree, for other polite histories of the Scottish Enlightenment, with Robertson being particularly prominent. Nevertheless, the profile of Hume, Robertson and Smollett in Scottish libraries immediately reflects the influence of the critical press in moulding reading tastes in Georgian Britain: they were all marked out for particular praise by the anonymous author of *Directions for a Proper Choice of Authors to form a Library* (1766) and their works were very widely distributed in libraries throughout the British Isles.<sup>46</sup> Further down the list, works that demonstrate some of the core traits of Scottish Enlightenment historiography are prominent, especially Henry's *History of Great Britain* (1771), which was typical in both its polite style and in its much-trumpeted 'new' treatment of the scope of history.<sup>47</sup> The distinctive conjectural approach to the history of human society which Robertson's *Charles V* helped pioneer seems to have had wide appeal in Scotland too, with Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* and Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man* (one of Sher's "modest sellers") outperforming more challenging works not listed here, notably John Millar's *Distinction of Ranks in Society* (found in 15% of relevant libraries in our dataset).<sup>48</sup>

While conjectural history usually looked to antiquity for evidence of the 'stadial' development of human society,<sup>49</sup> other works featured in Table 1.3 remind us of the continuing importance in Scotland of

<sup>46</sup> *Directions for a Proper Choice of Authors to form a Library* (London, 1766), 12, 16; its authorship is discussed by Kaufman, "Two Guides". Hume's *History* appeared in 46% of English libraries; Smollett's *History* in 34%; Robertson's *Scotland* in 38%. Comparisons with English libraries throughout this chapter are based on my own random sampling of 146 named sales catalogues from the 1780s and 1790s accessed online at ECCO, held by the Library of the Grolier Club, New York, or reproduced in the British Library's microfilm collection of Sotheby sales, listed in *Sotheby & Co. Catalogues of Sales: A Guide to the Microfilm Collection, 1734–1850 Part 1 Reels 1–71* (1973).

<sup>47</sup> M. S. Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740–1820* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 3–8.

<sup>48</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 648. Ferguson's *Civil Society* appeared in 17% of American catalogues, Kames's *Sketches* in 24%; Lundberg and May, "The Enlightened Reader", 283, 288. The distribution of these works was also considerably down in English libraries sampled here, with Ferguson found in 18%, and Kames, Millar and Stuart all found in around 10%.

<sup>49</sup> For the characteristic 'stadial' histories of the Scottish Enlightenment, see especially D. Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1990); H. M. Höpfel, "From savage to Scotsmen: Conjectural History in the Scottish Enlightenment", *Journal of British Studies*, 17 (1978), 19–40.

classical culture. John Gillies may not have replicated the success of his more illustrious predecessor as Historiographer Royal for Scotland (Robertson), but his *History of Ancient Greece* (1786) nevertheless appeared in 20% of relevant collections.<sup>50</sup> Despite Sher's insistence that it was a "modest seller" until well into the nineteenth century, Adam Ferguson's *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* was even more popular, due perhaps to its familiar subject matter and more immediate relevance to European affairs in the 1790s.<sup>51</sup> As Ferguson demonstrated in drawing allusions between events in modern France and classical Rome, antiquity did not merely provide source material for conjectural history; it also provided instructive lessons for the possible fate of the burgeoning British Empire in the best tradition of philosophical history. Another prominent historian on Scottish bookshelves, Robert Watson, sought his philosophical lessons in the experiences of Spanish imperialists in the sixteenth century. His histories of the reigns of *Philip II* (1777) and *Philip III* (1793) were listed in 25% and 17% of relevant collections overall respectively, but were in particular vogue in the years immediately following their publication – *Philip II* appearing in 35% of relevant catalogues between the late 1770s and 1801, and *Philip III* in 45% of catalogues in the same period.<sup>52</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Six, such works were taken by contemporary readers to inform issues with vital implications for the future viability of the British Empire, especially in North America.

Meanwhile, a good reception was seemingly guaranteed for all things Scottish. As we have seen, Robertson's *History of Scotland* was the second most popular work in the entire database, but that was symptomatic of the Scottish reading public's appetite for works that dealt with all aspects of the national past. Malcolm Laing's *History of Scotland*, marketed explicitly as a continuation of Robertson,<sup>53</sup> and Sir John

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<sup>50</sup> ODNB; D. Allan, "The Age of Pericles in the Modern Athens: Greek History, Scottish Politics and the Fading of Enlightenment", *Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), 391–417. Gillies appeared in just two English catalogues sampled.

<sup>51</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 662.

<sup>52</sup> D. Allan, "Anti-Hispanicism and the Construction of Late Eighteenth-century British Patriotism: Robert Watson's *History of the Reign of Philip the Second*", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 77 (2000), 423–49. *Phillip II* appeared in 20% of sampled English catalogues in this period.

<sup>53</sup> Laing offered his *History of Scotland* as a continuation of Robertson after editing the posthumous sixth volume of Henry's *History of Great Britain*; Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 601; Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 254.



Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* clearly enjoyed immense popularity amongst Scottish consumers, even though they were hardly ever reprinted and consequently rate merely as "modest sellers" in Sher's database.<sup>54</sup> Lord Hailes's *Annals of Scotland* (1776), another of Sher's "modest sellers", remarkably appeared in 34% of relevant catalogues, in spite of its "uninspiring" narrative and abstruse subject matter.<sup>55</sup>

The huge popularity of the vernacular poetry of Robert Burns also reflects this patriotic appetite for specifically Scottish themes, since it was apparently found in somewhat less than a quarter of English library catalogues sampled here. Even the supposedly-neglected Robert Fergusson appears in 19% of relevant catalogues in provincial Scotland, the vernacular style which these two poets shared in common serving it seems as a welcome antidote to the cultural Anglicisation to which Scottish audiences were increasingly being subjected as the eighteenth century progressed.<sup>56</sup> Their works must have been a great deal more familiar to readers in provincial Scotland than works aimed explicitly at expunging the Scots language from polite letters, with Beattie's *List of Two Hundred Scotticisms* (1779) appearing in 7% of relevant libraries and Sir John Sinclair's *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (1782) in just 5%.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps, then, imaginative literature and history sat side by side on contemporary bookshelves in celebrating and commemorating the cultural identity of the Scottish nation as its distinct political identity was fast receding from living memory.<sup>58</sup>

Outright patriotism certainly accounts for the diffusion of William Wilkie's now obscure *Epigoniad*. Critically, it was an absolute flop, at least in England: "if bad rhimes [sic] are to be deemed, as some think they are, a capital defect", a reviewer in the *Monthly Review* quipped,

<sup>54</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 686, 676.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 650; Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 211. Hailes's *Annals* was found in just two English catalogues sampled here.

<sup>56</sup> On cultural Anglicisation see R. Crawford, *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1998); D. Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: the Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London, 1964); K. G. Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen, 1988).

<sup>57</sup> J. G. Basker, "Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain", in John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (eds.), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993). Provincial responses to such works are discussed in Chapter Seven below.

<sup>58</sup> A point argued forcefully by J. A. Smith, "Some Eighteenth-Century Ideas of Scotland", N. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement: Essays in Scottish history in the Eighteenth Century* (1970; Edinburgh, 1996).

“our Author will be capitally convicted on many an indictment in the court of criticism”.<sup>59</sup> Yet it was included in Alexander Wedderburn’s famous list of Scotland’s greatest literary endeavours alongside Robertson’s *History of Scotland*, with even Hume hailing it as “one of the ornaments of our language”.<sup>60</sup> As Sher argues, “it was a continual source of embarrassment to Scottish men of letters that their country appeared in the eyes of the world to be an unpoetic nation”, and Hume was soon to be found exhorting friends in London “that you have so much love for Arts, & for your native Country, as to be very industrious in propagating the Fame of it”.<sup>61</sup> Here was the Scottish Homer (or Pope), a national epic poet to be promoted on behalf of Scotland in the bear-pit of London’s salon circuit – so it is no surprise to find it as a badge of honour in the collections of 84 patriotic Scottish book owners, despite its modest publication history.<sup>62</sup>

The prominence of another “modest seller” in Scottish libraries, Hugo Arnot’s *History of Edinburgh* (1779), points to a further feature of Scottish readers’ identification with patriotic themes, with regional historiography performing remarkably well at a local level.<sup>63</sup> Though they were extremely rare in English libraries and are considered too marginal to feature in Sher’s database, Lachlan Shaw’s *History of the Province of Moray* (1775) appeared in 29% of libraries in Aberdeenshire and a further 24% of Highland libraries, William Nimmo’s *General History of Stirlingshire* (1777) reached a peak distribution rate of 26% in libraries in and around Stirling and Perth, and George Ridpath’s *Border History* (1776) found a welcome home in 48% of libraries in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire. Such works of regional historiography would therefore

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted by E. C. Mossner, *The Forgotten Hume: Le Bon David* (Columbia, 1943), 72–3. Modern students have concurred with the contemporary English critics: Sher calls it “a ponderous self-consciously Homeric epic”, *Church and University*, 256, while Mossner suggests a possible remedy for modern readers who have actually read the thing: “I hereby solemnly affirm that I have no intention of following eminent precedent in founding an *Epigoniad Club* to consist of those who have had the temerity to read the entire epic”, 216. English catalogues sampled here would appear to endorse such assessments, with the *Epigoniad* appearing in just one catalogue.

<sup>60</sup> Mossner, *The Forgotten Hume*, quoting Hume, 74. Sher quotes Wedderburn in *Church and University*, 88; see also, Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 68, 74–6, 626–7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting Hume, 75.

<sup>62</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 626.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 423–4, 656; for Arnot’s historiography, see Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 108, 139–40.

seem to have been far from marginal to the Scottish Enlightenment as it was consumed in provincial Scotland.<sup>64</sup>

Edition numbers are a far better guide to the popularity of the Scottish Enlightenment belletrists. Here, Blair's *Lectures* (one of Sher's "bestsellers") and Kames's *Elements of Criticism* ("a strong seller") clearly emerged as the most popular of a whole host of books that forged what Nicholas Phillipson has described as the "most characteristic preoccupation of the Scottish Enlightenment".<sup>65</sup> Together with such books as Archibald Alison's *Essays on Taste* (in 21% of relevant libraries in the dataset), Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (20%), George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (19%, a "late bloomer" according to Sher),<sup>66</sup> and James Beattie's *Essays on Poetry and Music* (16%), Blair and Kames helped found the modern academic discipline of literary criticism, but they were also extremely significant influences on readers' personal encounters with books. In their concern to identify what constituted good taste they not only recommended some authors over others, they also propagated a particular method of reading – as we shall see in Chapter Five. Blair was probably the most successful exponent because he appealed to the lowest common denominator, claiming to base his discussions "on plain common sense, so as to be intelligible to all, without any abstruse metaphysics".<sup>67</sup>

Of philosophical texts more generally, Hume emerges as the favourite, perhaps surprisingly in light of the critical savaging his sceptical views endured in his own day.<sup>68</sup> The presence of the collected *Essays* in

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<sup>64</sup> There has been virtually no scholarship on these books; the sole exception is James H. Burns, "From Enquiry to Improvement: David Ure (1749–1798)", *Scottish Historical Review*, 87 (2008), 258–77. The standard treatment of English regional historiography is R. Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>65</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 662, 630; Phillipson, "Culture", 438. The contrast between Blair and Kames and the rest was even more pronounced elsewhere, with Beattie's *Essays* and Alison's *Essays on Taste* each listed in only 7% of library catalogues in America; Lundberg and May, "The Enlightened Reader". On the Scottish aesthetes, see Crawford, *Scottish Invention*; J. Engell, *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge MA and London, 1989), Ch8; Moran, *Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*; and L. L. Gaillet (ed.), *Scottish Rhetoric and its Influences* (Mahwah NJ, 1998).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted by ODNB.

<sup>68</sup> Critical responses are surveyed in J. Wright, "The Treatise: Composition, Reception and Response", in S. Traiger, *The Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise* (Oxford, 2006), 5–25; James Feiser (ed.), *Early Responses to Hume*, 10 vols (Bristol, 2003);

44% of relevant libraries supports the common argument that they were the primary vehicles through which Hume's more controversial views reached contemporary readers.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Hume's disappointment that the *Treatise of Human Nature* "fell dead-born from the press" is fully reflected in the catalogues with just 35 copies recorded in our sample, but the works through which he initially hoped to popularise his philosophical approach apparently fared even less well.<sup>70</sup> The *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) was found in 34 catalogues (around 8% of relevant collections), while the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) appeared in thirteen catalogues and the *Abstract of the Treatise of Human Nature* (1740) in just two. However, as we have seen, the *Principles of Morals* and *Enquiry* were both included in collected editions of the *Essays and Treatises*, so the vast majority of Hume's most controversial philosophy was thus much more readily accessible in provincial Scotland than these statistics would suggest. Indeed, this surprising implication of our analysis is endorsed by the relatively wide distribution of Hume's *Dialogues of Natural Religion* and *Political Discourses*, both found in 17% of relevant libraries.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, James Beattie, George Campbell, Dugald Stewart and Thomas Reid (whose two collections of *Essays* are both "modest sellers" in Sher's database) were all drawn into publishing in response to the provocative implications of Hume's philosophy, implying that in yet another sense Hume was absolutely central to the Scottish Enlightenment as a presence on Scottish bookshelves.<sup>72</sup> Beattie's bombastic style was apparently the most well-received antidote to Hume's scepticism in Scotland, his *Essay on Truth* (in fact a step-by-step refutation of Hume's

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see also R. L. Emerson, "The 'affair' at Edinburgh and the 'project' at Glasgow: the politics of Hume's attempts to become a professor", in M. A. Stewart and J. Wright, *Hume and Hume's Connexions* (Pennsylvania, 1995), especially 10–4; Davie, *Passion for Idea*, 11; and M. G. Spencer (ed.), *Hume's Reception in Early America*, 2 vols (Bristol, 2002), 2: 83–5.

<sup>69</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 45–50; Spencer, *Hume's Reception*, 2: 5; idem., *Hume*, 13–20. N. Phillipson rather underplays the popularity of the *Essays*, suggesting that the "*Essays, Moral, Political and Literary* did not sell well", and ignoring the impact made by the *Essays and Treatises* entirely; *Hume* (London, 1989), especially 2.

<sup>70</sup> Hume, *History*, 1: xxviii.

<sup>71</sup> The *Dialogues* were found in just 9% of American catalogues; Lundberg and May, "The Enlightened Reader".

<sup>72</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 666, 670; Davie, *Passion for Ideas*, 11; Phillipson, "Definition", 142–5.

most obnoxious propositions) appearing in 31% of relevant collections.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the impressive distribution of the more studious works of Reid and Stewart suggests that their uniquely Scottish brand of ‘Common Sense’ philosophy (so influential at American colleges in the nineteenth century) was much better received in Scotland than in other areas for which data has been collected.<sup>74</sup> University graduates were particularly alive to the appeal of Scotland’s ‘Common Sense’ philosophers: 52% of medical professionals owned copies of Reid’s *Inquiry*, while the same work appeared in 41% of libraries belonging to church ministers. The profile of Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) also deserves comment, found in around 35% of relevant collections – making it one of the most popular philosophical works of the whole period, and confirming modern assessments putting it at the heart of Scottish “discourse on the passions”.<sup>75</sup>

By contrast, Table 1.3 appears to marginalise the position of medicine and science in contemporary culture. Pioneering figures such as the chemist Joseph Black, the geologist James Hutton, and the medical men William Cullen and the two Alexander Monros, whatever the undoubted strength of their intellectual and pedagogical achievements, made very little impact. Robison’s 1803 edition of Black’s lectures, for example, appears in just 17 catalogues in our dataset (representing just over 6% of relevant libraries), while the most widely distributed works of Cullen and Monro *primus* are listed in less than 10% of relevant collections.<sup>76</sup> Even Playfair’s supposed popularisation of Huttonian geology apparently appears in only 8% of collections post-dating its publication in 1802, with Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth* (1795) itself appearing in 6%.<sup>77</sup> The same is true for medical works which Sher

<sup>73</sup> The *Essay on Truth* was found in just 13% of library catalogues in America; Lundberg and May, “The Enlightened Reader”. Beattie was also the most popular item of Common Sense philosophy in English libraries, appearing in 25% of sampled catalogues as opposed to the 20% in which Reid’s *Inquiry* appeared.

<sup>74</sup> Reid’s *Inquiry* was restricted to 14% of libraries in America, and his *Essays* to 17%; Stewart’s *Elements* were found in 12%; Lundberg and May, “The Enlightened Reader”.

<sup>75</sup> Dwyer, *Age of the Passions*, ch1; idem., *Virtuous Discourse*, ch7; for a range of new perspectives, see L. Montes and E. Schliesser (eds.), *New Voices on Adam Smith* (Abingdon, 2006). It was found in 25% of sampled English catalogues; and in 23% of American library catalogues, Lundberg and May, “The Enlightened Reader”.

<sup>76</sup> They fared a great deal better in the libraries of 23 medical men in our survey: Cullen’s *Synopsis* appeared in 69% of medical libraries, for instance, Monro’s *Anatomy of the Human Bones* in 59% and the *Edinburgh Medical Essays* in 64%.

<sup>77</sup> For a less than flattering contemporary view of the “ridiculous” Huttonian philosophy as elaborated by Playfair, see *Ochertyre*, 166.

describes as “bestsellers” or “strong sellers”, presumably on the basis of their popularity with specialist medical practitioners, including Sir John Pringle’s *Observations on the Diseases of the Army* (in 6% of relevant library catalogues surveyed here), William Smellie’s *Treatise on Midwifery* (4%) and Benjamin Bell’s *A System of Surgery* (3%).<sup>78</sup> Even high-profile Scottish works on agricultural improvement fail to make our list, although Adam Dickson’s *Treatise of Agriculture* (15%), James Anderson’s *Essays on Agriculture* (16%) and especially Lord Kames’s *Gentleman Farmer* (19%) did make some impact, especially on the bookshelves of provincial Scotland’s ostentatiously improving landed proprietors and tenant farmers.

Nevertheless, some scientific and medical works did reach a more significant proportion of the Scottish reading public. William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine* was found in over 35% of relevant catalogues, yet he barely figures in modern commentary on the medical Enlightenment.<sup>79</sup> Buchan’s appeal, and indeed his originality as a publishing phenomenon, lay in his accessibility: *Domestic Medicine* was explicitly marketed as a new kind of work, based on the belief that medical knowledge should be available to all. It was intended to be read by the layman both as a general guide to healthy living and as a manual to help readers diagnose and treat their own illnesses, complete with lists of remedies and a detailed dispensatory. It was thus of immediate practical relevance to contemporary Scottish households that had little or no access to professional medical provision.<sup>80</sup> The distribution of Smellie’s *Philosophy of Natural History* and James Ferguson’s *Astronomy Explained upon Newton’s Principles*, meanwhile, demonstrates the degree to which Scots engaged in the popularisation of science in eighteenth-century British culture.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 622, 664.

<sup>79</sup> Copies of *Domestic Medicine* appeared in 25% of English catalogues sampled here.

<sup>80</sup> ODNB; C. E. Rosenberg, “Medical Text and Social Context: Explaining William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*”, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 57 (1983), 22–42; R. B. Sher, “William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*: Laying Book History Open”, in P. Isaac and B. McKay (eds.), *The Human Face of the Book Trade: Print Culture and its Creators* (Winchester, 1999), 45–64.

<sup>81</sup> On the popularisation of science in eighteenth-century Britain, see Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), 142–9; Simon Schaffer, “Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle in the Eighteenth Century”, *History of Science*, 21 (1983), 1–43; Larry Stewart, “The Selling of Newton: Science and Technology in Early Eighteenth-Century England”, *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 179–92; idem., *The Rise of Science: Rhetoric, Technology and Natural Philosophy in*

## III

Analysis of book ownership in provincial Scotland thus gives a very general sense of the material distribution of the books of the Enlightenment, demonstrating that histories, imaginative literature and philosophical books were much more widely available than scientific and medical books. If we hope to reach a more accurate assessment of the circulation of Enlightenment books, however, it is not enough simply to add up how many libraries owned copies of specific books, since one copy may have reached many individuals. Quite apart from formal book-lending institutions that offered 'public' borrowing facilities, informal borrowing "existed on an extensive and unquantifiable scale".<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus recalled that her father's "books were a blessing, far and near", since he "thought a library kept for self was only the talent hid in a napkin, and that any loss or damage, rarely occurring, was to be balanced against the amount of good distributed".<sup>83</sup> John Brewer claims that such benevolence was remarkably widespread; "among the professional classes and minor gentry of provincial towns and rural villages, there was always a bibliophile or two who would lend out his books".<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it may well be

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*Newtonian Britain 1660–1750* (Cambridge, 1992); Jan Golinski, *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760–1820* (Cambridge, 1992). On the place of Newtonianism in Georgian sociability, see Christie, "Origins and Development"; R. L. Emerson, "The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh": "1737–1747", "1748–1768", and "1768–1783", *British Journal for the History of Science* (1979, 1981, 1985); S. Shapin, "The Audience for Science in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh", *History of Science* (1974), 95–121; idem., "Property, Patronage, and the Politics of Science: The Founding of the Royal Society of Edinburgh", *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 7 (1974), 1–41; G. Kitteringham, "Science in Provincial Society: The Case of Liverpool", *Annals of Science* 39 (1982): 329–33. J. R. Millburn, *A Bibliography of James Ferguson, F.R.S. (1710–1776)* (Aylesbury, 1983); idem., *Wheelwright of the Heavens: The Life and Work of James Ferguson, FRS* (London, 1988).

<sup>82</sup> R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500–1800* (London, 1988), 210; Woolf, *Reading History*, Ch4. Little detailed research has been done on inter-personal book loans, but see D. Allan, "A Nation of Readers": *The Lending Library in Georgian England, c.1720–c.1830* (London, 2008), 212–4.

<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (Edinburgh, 1998), 1: 303–4.

<sup>84</sup> J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London, 1997), 186; see also Barker, *Treasures*, 3; M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven and London, 1978), 180. A. L. N. Munby argues that "in more leisurely days when visitors came for a month and when the winter mud made the surrounding lanes all but impassable, self-sufficiency in reading matter assumed an importance which it is difficult to envisage"; "The Library", in R. Strong, M. Binney and J. Harris (eds.), *The Destruction of the Country House 1875–1975* (London, 1974), 106–7.

more appropriate to follow William Sherman's lead in talking of "privy libraries" rather than strictly private libraries, especially as the country house library was increasingly regarded in the Georgian period as a public venue explicitly intended for the reception of guests, to encourage polite sociability and even to facilitate a degree of chaperoned courtship.<sup>85</sup>

The best evidence we have that inter-personal book loans were widespread often comes in the form of notes explicitly giving permission for borrowing. For instance, the laird of Grant drafted a memo on 6 December 1765 that empowered his clerk "to lend out of the Library to any of the Gentlemen of this Country what books they may want for their amusement", although he insisted

You are to let no one what-ever go into the Library, only let them tell you the books they want & you will give them out. And as I would not chuse to have too many out at a time, never give out above six at once in whole.<sup>86</sup>

On occasions, moreover, it is obvious that the bond of trust that underpinned "privy" borrowing had broken down entirely – giving further proof that such borrowing was commonplace, even if it was not always administered according to best practice. Lists of missing books from eighteenth-century libraries are a common occurrence in the archival collections of Scotland's landed families. Equally, library owners frequently called for the return of books, not having recorded precisely who had borrowed what. This was clearly the case with the laird of Monymusk who asked for the following printed circular to be distributed at churches, inns and bookshops across the region:

Whereas many Books have been borrowed from the library of Monymusk, and have not been Returned, which renders many sets incomplete, it is entreated that those possessed of such would return them immediately to Monymusk house or to the Publisher of this paper – and if any by accident should appear at sales with the ffamilys [sic] Arms or Sir

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<sup>85</sup> "Privy library" is used by W. H. Sherman, "The Place of Reading in the English Renaissance: John Dee Revisited", in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor, (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996); for the view that social exchanges in the domestic sphere had a 'public' function, see especially Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 195 ff.

<sup>86</sup> NAS GD248/25/2/20, Order by James Grant of Grant anent loan of books from Castle Grant Library, 6 December 1765.



Archibald Grants Name in them – beg that they may be retained or that the family or Publisher may be acquainted which will be Gratefully acknowledged.<sup>87</sup>

In exceptional circumstances, formal borrowing registers have survived, and these constitute the most detailed evidence for how such “privy” borrowing functioned. One such register survives for the Castle Grant Library between 1707 and 1744, while another survives for the collection at Glamis Castle between 1740 and 1754.<sup>88</sup> More pertinently for the present study, a number of detailed registers survive for country house libraries from the 1760s through to the first decades of the nineteenth century – precisely the period when we would hope to find the works of the Scottish Enlightenment finding a receptive audience.

Borrowing registers surviving at Brodie, Craigston and elsewhere confirm that the family library was one of the main focuses of genteel sociability in rural Scotland, with “privy” borrowing readily extending to other neighbouring families.<sup>89</sup> The Urquharts of Craigston Castle lent books to many of the major landed families in Aberdeenshire, including representatives of the Fergusons of Kinmudie, the Frasers of Philorth, the Gordons of Fyvie, the Menzies of Pitfoddles, the Ogilvies of Auchiries and the Turners of Turnerhall. The Brodie Castle register features an even more bewildering range of lairdly families, perhaps reflecting the greater prestige of the Brodie family: borrowers included the Gordon Cummings baronets of Altyre, including Lady Cumming Gordon of Forres House; the Rose lairds of Kilravock; the Brander lairds of Pitgavney; Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, baronet and novelist of Relugas; William McIntosh Esq. of Millbank, near Nairn; Lewis Brodie Dunbar of Lethen and Burgie; Robert Innes, laird of Leuchars; Alexander Falconar, laird of Blackhills; Sir James Dunbar of Boath; Norman McLeod of Dalvey; and the Russell family of Earlsmill. Books seem to have been one of the ways in which such individuals and families engaged with each other, allowing them to impress

<sup>87</sup> NAS GD345/800/10, Library Notes at Monymusk House.

<sup>88</sup> NAS GD248/485/8, Catalogue of Books at Castle Grant; NRAS 885 Box 67, Glamis Castle Library Borrowing Register.

<sup>89</sup> Much of the following derives from my analysis of the library registers of Brodie Castle (near Nairn) and Craigston Castle (near Turriff, Aberdeenshire); both registers are in private hands.

neighbours with their impeccable taste as well as providing ample materials on which to base their polite conversation and sociable interaction.<sup>90</sup>

That seems to have been particularly the case for gentlewomen in provincial Scotland, with private libraries apparently providing a venue for their sociable reading of many of the most distinctive books of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Brodie sisters of Burgie, the Russell sisters of Earlsmill and Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock all used the Brodie Library in the 1780s, almost certainly on the invitation of young women in the Brodie household. They were joined in using that library by at least ten other ladies, while female borrowers were even more prevalent at Craigston Castle, all tending to borrow the same kind of texts – namely, the polite histories of Hume and Robertson, and the *belles lettres* of Campbell, Kames, Beattie and Mackenzie. Mary Urquhart of Craigston, notably the sole member of the family to sign her name in the borrowing register, perhaps invited them to Craigston in part to use the library, and it may be that she initiated there an informal reading club for likeminded genteel ladies in the area between Turriff, Banff and Peterhead.<sup>91</sup>

More broadly, though, it is clear that “privy” borrowing was not confined to the landed classes in provincial Scotland. In fact, benevolent library owners also extended their largesse to members of the professional classes, even in Edinburgh. The advocate John Erskine of Cambus lent books kept at his Edinburgh townhouse to Charles Hope, advocate and future Lord Granton, Lord Napier, soon to win celebrity as an army officer, and William Greenfield, a future Moderate minister and ultimately Hugh Blair’s hapless successor at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>92</sup> In the north east, the Brodies lent books to physicians, surgeons and lawyers from nearby Nairn, Elgin and Inverness, enjoying particularly close links with medical men charged with the care of the army garrison at Fort George, not to mention many of the officers stationed there. Church of Scotland ministers were equally welcome to borrow books from the Brodie Castle Library, as they were at Craigston, with Rev.

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<sup>90</sup> Colclough suggested that books were “the glue that binds together any community of readers operating within a culture in which books are too expensive to be bought regularly”; *Consuming Texts*, 126; a similar point is made by Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1965), 213.

<sup>91</sup> Craigston Castle Library, borrowing register. My thanks to Isla Woodman for this suggestion.

<sup>92</sup> NLS MS 5118-20, Notebooks of John Erskine of Cambus; *ODNB*.

Alexander Rose of Auchterless and Rev. Robert Duff of King Edward's being particularly frequent visitors. The lairds of Ballindalloch went even further to ameliorate the scarcity of books in the wilds of North East Scotland, habitually sending books to clergymen in relatively isolated Speyside parishes for the winter. For instance, Rev. William Spence received MacLaurin's *Account of Newton* and Campbell's *Lives of the Admirals* in a packet of books dispatched to his parish of Inveravon for the season in November 1801. Spence borrowed Somerville's *History of Queen Anne* and *Political Transactions* three years later, while his successor received Robertson's *Charles V* and three historical works by James 'Ossian' Macpherson from Ballindalloch Castle in October 1815.<sup>93</sup>

Thomas Crawford, baronet of Cartburn, lent books to the usual motley collection of magistrates, clergymen, writers and physicians in nearby Greenock, but he was also happy to share them with more lowly members of the community such as John Wilson, a schoolmaster who borrowed Innes's *Critical Essay* in 1773, the carpenter Archibald Lang, the wigmaker James Stewart and the barber John McLeod.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, "privy" borrowing was often a major source of books for the underprivileged who could not otherwise afford them in rural Scotland. The Lochend poet and shepherd Alexander Bethune (born in 1804) enthused that "after it became known that we were readers, the whole of our acquaintances, far and near, and even some people whom we could hardly number as such, appeared eager to lend us books".<sup>95</sup> Thomas Murray, who later made a name locally by publishing a popular *Literary History of Galloway* (1822), relied on "privy" borrowing to make his early entrance in the literature of the Scottish Enlightenment when a student in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright:

My schoolfellow, George Mure, had lent me, in 1791, an edition of Ossian's *Fingal*, which is in many passages a sublime and pathetic performance. I copied *Fingal*, as the book was lent only for a few days, and carried the MS about with me... In spring 1794, I got a reading of Blair's *Lectures*. The book was lent by Mr. Strang, a Relief clergyman, to William Hume, and *sublent* to me.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> NRAS 771 Bundle 1002, Lists of Books in the Library, 1797–1820.

<sup>94</sup> NLS MS 2822, Catalogue of Books of Thomas Crawford of Cartburn.

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Rose, *Intellectual Life*, 60.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Murray, *Literary History of Galloway: from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Edinburgh, 1822), 245–6, 249 (the emphasis is original).

Both Murray and Bethune evidently attracted book loans because they were well known to be avid readers, but it is also clear that such practices often facilitated a reader's first encounter with books of any kind. The son of John Forrest, a Forfarshire artisan, first became a reader when "an old shoemaker in Trottick lent me *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roderick Random*", although he recalled with touching naivety that he was "grievously disappointed when I afterwards learned that they were both creations of imaginative genius".<sup>97</sup> More famously, the 'Ettrick Shepherd' James Hogg was given freedom to roam his landlord's "considerable library", "but better than any booklore was the intimacy he formed with his master's son, who directed his studies, criticised his rude literary attempts" and became a lifelong companion in reading.<sup>98</sup>

As one might expect, "privy" borrowing often meant simply the loan of specialist material to professional researchers. Roxburghe made his Library at Floors open to "bona fide scholars" – Joseph Ritson and Sir Walter Scott were both well qualified and made full use of the extensive collection in their researches into Scottish Border ballads.<sup>99</sup> This was particularly true of scientific and medical literature, the kind of material that was vital for certain professions but that only tended to be available in the largest or most specialised collections. George Sinclair, a surgeon newly arrived in Thurso, borrowed six anatomical books from his kinsman William Sinclair Esq. of Lochend on 12 April 1794, while the medical men who frequented the Brodie Castle Library borrowed such works as the *Edinburgh Medical Essays* and Duncan's *Medical Commentaries*.<sup>100</sup> Ridpath borrowed Cleghorn's *Epidemical Diseases* from a surgeon in Kelso, while he sourced agricultural manuals like Home's *Principles of Agriculture and Vegetation* and Miller's *Gardeners' and Florists' Dictionary* from neighbouring landowners.<sup>101</sup> A member of the farming Pierson family of Balmadies in Angus, whose reading experiences are discussed in Chapter Seven, borrowed a series of works on agricultural improvement "from Mr Brown which belong to David Cowper",<sup>102</sup> while William Dick, presumably a tenant farmer

<sup>97</sup> *Chapters in the Life of a Dundee Factory Boy: An Autobiography* (Dundee, 1850), 55.

<sup>98</sup> James Russell, *Reminiscences of Yarrow* (Selkirk, 1894), 186; ODNB.

<sup>99</sup> Hillyard, "John Ker", 198–9.

<sup>100</sup> NAS GD136/1195, Books Belonging to William Sinclair Esq of Lochend & Delivered to Mr George Mackie, 12 April 1794; Brodie Castle Library register.

<sup>101</sup> *Ridpath*, 116 and 235.

<sup>102</sup> Angus Local Studies Centre, MS 324, Pierson of Balmadies Farm Commonplace Book, 157.

or smallholder living in or around Blairgowrie in Perthshire, thanked General McIntyre for the loan of an unnamed book of the same persuasion – “I hope to improve by it in the *farming* way”.<sup>103</sup> The Uruqharts of Craigston were also happy to lend out books like Anderson’s *Essays on Agriculture* and Dickson’s *Treatise on Agriculture* to local workers, including John Marr, an estate worker from nearby Turriff, and Alexander Reid, the Craigston gardener, while Monymusk queried whether some books missing from his collection in 1759 (including Miller’s *Dictionary*) had been lent to the head gardener, William Lunny.<sup>104</sup>

“Privy” borrowing seemingly secured a much broader readership for technical works of philosophy and history that were not as widely available as books like Hume’s *History of England* or Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*. George Ridpath was again typical in this regard, borrowing rare, ephemeral or expensive works like Ferguson’s attributed *History of Peg*, Fordyce’s *Dialogues Concerning Education* and Logan’s *Treatise on Government* from friends in Edinburgh and neighbouring Roxburghshire landowners.<sup>105</sup> Robert Innes of Leuchars, who would no doubt have owned his own library, borrowed Millar’s *English Constitution* from Brodie Castle, while Ferguson’s *Essay* and *History of the Roman Republic* were both borrowed by various interested parties. At Craigston, Ferguson’s *Essay* was borrowed three times as was Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*, while much rarer material like Lord Hailes’s *Memorials and Letters* and Steuart’s *Principles of Political Oeconomy* were also loaned out. Even in the “Athens of the North”, works that are generally considered important components of the Scottish Enlightenment were borrowed from private book collectors presumably because they were not readily available elsewhere. Thus Ferguson’s *Essay*, Millar’s *Distinction of Ranks*, Hutcheson’s *Essay and Inquiry* and Lord Monboddo’s *Origin and Progress of Language* were all amongst the more technical works lent out by Erskine of Cambus.

Finally, however, “privy” borrowing also offers further insights into the sheer popularity of the bestselling books of the Scottish Enlightenment. At both Brodie and Craigston, Hume’s *History*, Robertson’s

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<sup>103</sup> NRAS 2614 Bundle 115, Personal Correspondence of William Macpherson, 1818–1820; Dick to William Macpherson, 20 July 1820 (the emphasis is original).

<sup>104</sup> Craigston Castle Library borrowing register; NAS GD345/800/16, Library records, Monymusk House.

<sup>105</sup> *Ridpath*, 373, 75 and 117

*History of Scotland, America* and Charles V, Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and *Moral Sentiments*, Watson's *Philip II*, Dalrymple's *Memoirs*, Henry's *History*, Blair's *Lectures* and Kames's *Sketches* were borrowed with equal rapacity by men and women, by landed elites and the professional classes. Ridpath borrowed Fordyce's *Sermons*, Home's *Siege of Aquileia* and *Ossian's Works* from his neighbours, while another Church of Scotland minister, David Cruden of Nigg, loaned out his own copies of Robertson, Reid, Beattie and Campbell to fellow ministers and professionals in and around Aberdeen.<sup>106</sup> Books lent out by Erskine of Cambus when he left Edinburgh for the summer months included Blair's *Lectures*, Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, Hume's *Essays*, Watson's *Philip II* and a collected edition of the *Mirror*. Not only were such impeccable instances of polite learning amongst the most widely distributed works in provincial Scotland, then, they also consistently rated as the most regularly used books in private collections.

#### IV

To a certain extent, of course, the reading preferences investigated in this chapter were not distinctively Scottish, but instead reflected the success of the emerging engines of criticism in imposing uniformity on the British "nation of readers", in Samuel Johnson's memorable phrase.<sup>107</sup> That Scots bought and presumably read Hume, Robertson, Reid, Beattie, Smith and Blair in their droves is unexceptional, even though their popularity demonstrates that the distinctive ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment were indeed circulating in provincial Scotland. Their works were amongst the most popular throughout Britain, usually commended in the most glowing terms in the leading critical reviews and in numerous works on literature, good taste and library formation. Nonetheless, it seems equally clear that the Scottish reading public did exhibit its own distinctive preferences in certain areas. Scottish library owners were apparently more eager consumers of the distinctive conjectural history of the Scottish Enlightenment than their English neighbours, and seem to have been considerably more receptive to the

<sup>106</sup> Ridpath, 324, 307 and 324; NAS CH2/555/29, Commonplace Book of Dr David Cruden, minister of Nigg.

<sup>107</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*, 10 vols (London, 1779–1781), 8: 33.

Common Sense school of philosophers who responded to Hume's dangerous scepticism. More broadly, books on Scottish themes and by Scottish authors seem to have circulated well in Scotland even when they suffered from relatively poor publishing histories, with the low print runs and few editions published in Britain of "modest sellers" by Adam Ferguson, William Wilkie, Sir John Sinclair and Hugo Arnot obscuring their relative popularity amongst consumers in Scotland.

However, to return to Darnton's suggestion that catalogues can "serve as a profile of a reader", there is an awful lot that they leave unsaid, not least that "we don't read all the books we own and we do read many books that we never purchase".<sup>108</sup> As we have seen, books in private hands often reached many individual readers. "Privy" borrowing from private collections expanded the reading nation dramatically, allowing rare and prohibitively expensive books such as Millar's *Distinction of Ranks*, Home's *Principles of Agriculture and Vegetation* and Steuart's *Principles of Political Oeconomy* to circulate much more extensively than would have been the case if they had been hoarded jealously on the bookshelves of individual readers. More importantly, perhaps, they demonstrate that the very works which Sher designates "bestsellers" on the basis of their publishing history were not only widely owned by Scottish book collectors, but also widely used by their friends, neighbours, relatives and dependents. Although they must form an essential part of any convincing history of readers, book catalogues can only ever be a first step in mapping the reception of a body of literature by historical readers, and we must draw on the full range of further sources, including information on borrowing from libraries and evidence of individuals' reading experiences, to arrive at a more complete picture of their consumption of the Scottish Enlightenment. Moreover, catalogues alone provide only limited insights into the role of critical culture in shaping literary consumption, and more detailed information is required concerning library acquisition policies and the reception of the critical reviews themselves before we can address important questions regarding how consumers' choices were shaped. Before we can introduce documentary evidence that illuminates the reading experience itself, then, we must first explore more fully the institutional and cultural framework within which many Scottish readers encountered the core texts involved.

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<sup>108</sup> Darnton, *Kiss*, 162.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “A POWERFUL MEANS OF IMPROVING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD”: SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES

On 1 May 1770, twenty local gentlemen met in a tavern in Kirkcudbright with ambitions to affect a cultural renaissance in their wider community. As the minutes record,

The meeting unanimously agree that a Public Library, established at this place upon a proper foundation and under proper regulations, will be attended with great improvement as well as entertainment; and many of them having previous to this day considered the matter privately, they composed a set of articles which they were of opinion might be properly submitted to the consideration of the subscribers.<sup>1</sup>

The gathering constituted the great and the good of the local community, with Provost William Lenox, representatives of the 4th Earl of Selkirk (a dogged improver and a former student of Francis Hutcheson at Glasgow) and four prominent landholders leading the way. Six more merchant councillors were present, along with William Laurie and John Buchanan, collector and surveyor of the customs respectively, as well as the parish minister, Robert Muter, two lawyers and the surgeon John Walker.

On the most functional level, their new library was intended to facilitate “the immediate purchasing a collection of the most valuable books on antient and modern history, voyages travels Belles Lettres Agriculture etc.”, bringing within their collective compass a collection of prestigious and canonical books that many of them would not have been able to afford individually.<sup>2</sup> They thus reflected a growing fashion across Britain that sought to institutionalise the informal circulation of books that we introduced at the end of Chapter One.<sup>3</sup> But such private

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<sup>1</sup> Hornel Library MS4/26, Minute Book of the Kirkcudbright Subscription Library, 1 May 1770; for a general description of the Library, see F. J. L. Brown, “Kirkcudbright Public Library: an examination of an eighteenth century Scottish Subscription Library” (unpublished dissertation, held by Stewartry Museum).

<sup>2</sup> Kirkcudbright Minutes, 1 May 1770.

<sup>3</sup> For Scottish subscription libraries, see Kaufman; K. A. Manley, “Scottish Circulating and Subscription Libraries as Community Libraries”, *LH*, 19 (2003), 185–94;



subscription libraries did not simply facilitate access to many of the books which interest us in this study. They also allowed provincial Scots to engage in some of the leading cultural priorities of the age, including the pursuit of politeness, sociability, and, above all, improvement.<sup>4</sup> As the Kirkcudbright subscribers agreed, their “Public Library” (the name reflected their public-spirited associationalism rather than the library’s principles of access) was explicitly intended to contribute to the “great improvement” of intellectual culture in the town: “We the following subscribers considering the great utility of the above plan for establishing a public library at Kirkcudbright, do heartily approve of the same”.<sup>5</sup>

## I

Despite Paul Kaufman’s pessimism that evidence for historical library provision in Scotland is “widely scattered, obscure, uncharted, often painfully scant – and much that is so sorely needed is apparently lost”, enough material does survive to support a nationwide comparative

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J. C. Crawford, “The Origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland” (unpublished MA thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1981); for the British context, see J. Raven, “From Promotion to Proscription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-century Libraries”, in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor, (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), 175–201; P. Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London, 1969); Allan, *Nation of Readers*.

<sup>4</sup> Phillipson, “Culture”; idem., “Politics, Politeness and the Anglicisation of Early Eighteenth-Century Scottish Culture”, in R. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), 226–46; idem., “The Scottish Enlightenment”, in M. Teich and R. Porter (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), 19–40. On politeness in British culture, see Brewer, *Pleasures*.

<sup>5</sup> Kirkcudbright Minutes, 1 May 1770; for discussion of the use of the term ‘public library’ in the Georgian period, see J. Innes, “Libraries in Context: Social, Cultural and Intellectual Background”, in *CHLB2*, 297–8; M. Powell, “Endowed Libraries for Towns”, in *CHLB2*, 83. On the growth of associationalism in Britain, see Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*; and on the wider context, Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*. For the classic argument that such associative activities joined with commercial developments in contributing to the “expansion of the public sphere” in eighteenth-century Britain, see J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962; trans. T. Burger; Cambridge, 1989), discussed in depth in J. Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001); D. Goodman, “Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime”, *History and Theory*, 31 (1992), 1–20; A. J. la Vopa, “Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe”, *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), 79–116; Munck, *Enlightenment*, 14–7.

analysis for the age of Enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> At least 15 subscription libraries were founded before 1790, and a further 37 dated to the 1790s. If this represented quite slow progress compared to England (where there were nearly 100 by 1800) and some parts of continental Europe, the spread of associational reading in provincial Scotland over the next thirty years, with 203 founded between 1800 and 1830, lent credence to claims leading up to the Public Libraries Act (1850) that “in the boroughs of Ayr and Kilmarnock, and in almost every borough in Scotland there were excellent libraries established without any help whatever from that House”.<sup>7</sup> Subscription libraries had been founded not only in traditional county towns like Perth, Cupar, Ayr and Stranraer, but also in the industrial towns that were becoming such a dominant feature of the Scottish urban landscape, such as Falkirk, Greenock and Kilmarnock.<sup>8</sup> However, associational library activity in the far north was still confined to the larger urban centres even in 1820; being found only in Inverness, Wick, Peterhead, Banff and Tain.<sup>9</sup>

Subscription libraries were just one of a range of different types of institution that provided book-lending facilities in eighteenth-century Scotland, none of which were ‘public’ in the modern sense. Subscription libraries themselves were essentially private clubs: members paid an entry fee and an additional subscription each quarter for an equal share in the society; the library they accumulated over the years was intended

<sup>6</sup> Kaufman, 234.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Oswald MP of Auchencruire, quoted by W. R. Aitken, *A History of the Public Library Movement in Scotland to 1955* (Glasgow, 1971), 1. For background, see K. A. Manley, “Engines of Literature: Libraries in an Era of Expansion and Transition”, in *CHLB2*, 509–10. For the “uneven” spread of associational reading in continental Europe, see Munck, *Enlightenment*, 98–9; C. Jolly (ed.), *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises*, vol. 2: *Les bibliothèques sous l'ancien régime 1530–1780* (Paris, 1988); M. Stützel-Prüsener, “Die deutschen Lesegesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung”, in O. Dann (ed.), *Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation: ein europäischer Vergleich* (Munich, 1981). There were some 49 *cabinets de lecture* in France by the time of the Revolution, but over five hundred *lesegesellschaften* in Germany by the end of the century.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed case study on the Perth Library, see Allan, “Provincial Readers”. The Subscription Library in Cupar is discussed in Paula Martin, *Cupar: The History of a Small Scottish Town* (Edinburgh, 2006), who wrongly identifies it as a commercial venture.

<sup>9</sup> For a fuller account of the distribution and development of Scottish subscription libraries, see Alston; Crawford, “Origins”; and Manley, “Scottish Circulating and Subscription Libraries”, 185–94. For the broader British perspective, see F. Beckwith, “The Eighteenth-Century Proprietary Library in England”, *Journal of Documentation*, 3 (1947–1948), 81–98; Allan, *Nation of Readers*; and *CHLB2*.

to be permanent.<sup>10</sup> As members of the Renton Subscription Library (founded in 1797) explained,

One working man...cannot have a library of his own; but a number of such men united may, if they choose, soon have one among them: by their mutual concurrence and co-operation, a joint stock may be raised, proper books may be purchased and all the partners may be enlightened and improved by the reading of them, at a comparatively trifling expense to each.<sup>11</sup>

The typical 'Book Club' tended to be less formal and much smaller, with books being sold off to finance the frequent turnover of stock.<sup>12</sup> However, they rarely functioned in any way differently from subscription libraries in book selection and intellectual outlook, and in reality, the boundaries could often be blurred even on the crucial matter of book stock. The Peterhead Reading Society, on the face of it a typical book club in the sense that membership hovered at around thirty for its first five years, addressed the fine detail of the turnover of books in their first meeting in 1808:

The meeting thought it would be expedient to determine in the outset of the institution whether the books to be purchased by means of the first subscription are to be sold at the end of the year, or are to be reserved to form the foundation of a Public Library in the Town of Peterhead? After deliberating on the subject it was the opinion of the meeting, that the object of the subscribers would be most effectually attained by the immediate formation of a *Permanent Library*; and therefore, they unanimously agreed and resolved, that the books to be purchased by them shall be reserved for this purpose, whilst at the same time, they consider that it will be proper occasionally to dispose of such books as may be found on examination to be unworthy of a place in their collection.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than disposing of books as a matter of course to refresh the collection, then, associational readers in Peterhead agreed from the outset only to sell those they considered "unworthy" of a "permanent

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<sup>10</sup> For a useful summary, see St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 263, Table 13.1. For subscription fees and other aspects of their administration, see Manley, "Scottish Circulating and Subscription Libraries"; Allan, "Provincial Readers"; Crawford, "Origins"; idem., "Historical models of library provision: the example of Scotland" (unpublished PhD thesis, Glasgow Caledonian University).

<sup>11</sup> *Catalogue of Renton Library* (Glasgow, 1819), 5.

<sup>12</sup> For examples, see K. A. Manley, "Rural Reading in North West England: The Sedbergh Book Club, 1728–1928", *BH*, 2 (1999), 78–85; J. Morley, "Newark Book Society 1777–1872", *LH*, 1 (1968–1969), 77–86.

<sup>13</sup> ALIS, Ab75 A9, Sederunt Books of the Peterhead Reading Society, 1808–1829, 4–5.

collection” – though they never clarified in writing how they would decide on the “worthiness” of specific titles.

The outstanding distinction in book provision during this period was, in fact, the difference between these associational libraries – that is, these subscription libraries and book clubs that were defined by the active association of their members (and by the “worthiness” of their intentions, as we shall see) – and the lending libraries which were maintained and operated by booksellers. Usually termed ‘circulating libraries’ by contemporaries, these commercial operations were certainly an important access point for Scottish Enlightenment texts in some towns in provincial Scotland, but whatever the enlightened tone of their advertising, they were run primarily for profit rather than intellectual or cultural aspirations.

## II

If associational libraries were private clubs of like-minded individuals we need to know who was involved and what social groups they represented. Unsurprisingly, most could depend on the support and patronage of traditional landed elites. We have it on good authority that the Duke of Roxburghe helped rescue the Kelso Subscription Library from financial ruin,<sup>14</sup> while subscribers to the Fowlis Library in Angus expressed their gratitude to “the Honourable Baron Sir Patrick Murray of Ochertyre, for his very kind and liberal conduct in building... without any solicitation a handsome and convenient room to contain their Books”.<sup>15</sup> Many were also subscribers: Kelso boasted the support of four baronets and two nobles (including Roxburghe), the Ayr Library Society listed the Law Lords Alloway and Craig as subscribers (the latter happened to be Adam Smith’s favourite student, as well as Henry Mackenzie’s collaborator in *The Mirror* magazine) and the Hamilton Subscription Library featured the Duke of Hamilton, his wife and his brother, the MP Lord Archibald Hamilton, amongst its members.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Ridpath*, 283.

<sup>15</sup> Dundee City Archives, CH2/254/10, Fowlis Library Minute Book 1815, 1821–1867, 29 November 1827.

<sup>16</sup> *Catalogue of the Books in Kelso Library* (Edinburgh, 1793); Carnegie Library, Ayr, 672QC, Minutes of the Ayr Library Society, 31 January 1776–1875; *Names of Subscribers to the Hamilton Subscription Library* (Glasgow, 1824). For William Craig, see ODNB; Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 24; 28–9; 51; 54–5; 103; 143–5.

However, such individuals rarely featured in the day-to-day running of subscription libraries and were usually more significant for their prestigious patronage and financial support rather than their active participation – rather like royal patrons of charitable organisations today. The 8th Earl of Galloway, whose father was a founding subscriber to the Wigtown Subscription Library, was thanked by the committee for his donation of a richly-bound presentation copy of *Caledonia* in February 1813, but does not appear anywhere else in either the minute book or, still more revealingly, in the borrowing registers.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, it is abundantly clear that the prime movers in subscription libraries in Scotland were the traditionally literate elements of provincial society, the professional classes, doctors, surgeons, lawyers and, above all, church ministers – as in England, where professionals dominated associations like the Amicable Society in Lancaster, the Bradford Library and Literary Society, and the Liverpool Library.<sup>18</sup> The Ayr Library Society, for whom the most complete subscription lists survive, was typical: of 327 members over a forty year period, 33 were lawyers, 26 were clergymen, 18 were physicians or surgeons and 11 were bankers.<sup>19</sup> Even the Leadhills Subscription Library, long a celebrated bastion of ‘working-class’ learning, originally provided intellectual sustenance for the professional managers of the Leadhills Mining Company – including Matthew Wilson, senior clerk and a regular companion of the mine manager, the university-educated James Stirling, Robert Whitfield, another clerk, and the village surgeon, James Wells.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hornel Library MS11/28, Wigtown Library Borrowing Book 1797–1799; MS5/27, Wigtown Library Regulations and Minute Book. A catalogue of the 7th Earl’s books is held at the GCL 08.25\G174\1797 Folio, Catalogue of the Earl of Galloway’s Library at Galloway House, Wigtownshire, July 1812; the library was described in OSA, 5: 498.

<sup>18</sup> D. Allan, “Eighteenth-Century Private Subscription Libraries and Provincial Urban Culture: The Amicable Society of Lancaster, 1769–c.1820”, *LH*, 17 (2001), 57–76; D. Roberts and B. Duckett, “The Bradford Library and Literary Society, 1774–1980”, *LH*, 22 (2006), 213–26; M. K. Flavell, “The enlightened reader and the new industrial towns: a study of the Liverpool Library 1758–1790”, *BJ18CS*, 8 (1985), 17–36. See also, Raven, “Libraries”; Allan, *Nation of Readers*; P. Kaufman, “The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History”, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series 57: 7 (1967), 25–38.

<sup>19</sup> Ayr Minutes.

<sup>20</sup> John Crawford points out that “the evidence suggests that not only were the miners not the founders of the library, they were not even its original membership”, “Leadhills Library and a Wider World”, *Library Review*, 46 (1997), 539–53. The original list of Leadhills members from 1741 is held at NLS Acc. 3076. For discussion of ‘working class’ libraries in Scotland, see Crawford, “Origins”, Chaps 4 and 6; J. C. Crawford, “The Ideology of Mutual Improvement in Scottish Working Class Libraries”,

The same professions were also instrumental in the foundation and management of subscription libraries – not least Wells himself, who was the first President of the Leadhills Reading Society. Five ministers, eight lawyers and two surgeons were intimately involved in the foundation of the Perth Library in 1786, while two lawyers and four ministers attended the first meeting of the Duns Subscription Library in 1768 – one of whom was Adam Dickson, author of a popular pair of works on agricultural improvement.<sup>21</sup> In his *Literary History of Galloway* (1822), Thomas Murray credited Wigtown's incumbent Church of Scotland minister, Andrew Donnan, with founding the subscription library there – “being a scholar himself, and impressed with the dignity of knowledge”, Donnan was reportedly “anxious to disseminate intelligence among all ranks of the people”.<sup>22</sup> His collaborators in running the society included the county's leading lawyer, William McConnell Esq. of Culbae, the sheriff-clerk depute Robert McKeand, the two surgeons Samuel Shortridge and Robert Moodie, and five more clergymen from neighbouring parishes.<sup>23</sup> That these professions should provide an impetus to provincial Enlightenment should be no surprise: the church and the law provided many of the Scottish Enlightenment's greatest minds, and were the two most firmly established institutions in eighteenth-century provincial society.<sup>24</sup> Churchmen, lawyers and doctors also tended to share in common a university education, giving subscription libraries a direct link to the Scottish Enlightenment as it was produced at the Scottish universities.<sup>25</sup>

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*LH*, 12 (1996), 49–61; idem., “Reading and Book Use in Eighteenth-Century Scotland”, *Bibliothèque*, 19 (1994), especially 36; J. C. Crawford and Stuart James, *The Society for Purchasing Books in Wanlockhead 1756–1979* (Glasgow, 1981); A. R. Thomson, “The use of Libraries by the Working Class in Scotland in the Early Nineteenth Century”, *SHR*, 42 (1963), 21–9; B. Burgh, “Libraries and Literacy in Popular Education”, in *CHLB2*, especially 379.

<sup>21</sup> On Perth, see Allan, “Provincial Readers”; on Dickson, see *ODNB*. Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, DL/3/1, Record of the Laws, Regulations, and Proceedings of the Subscribers for a Public Library at Dunse, 1768–1850. The foundation of the Duns ‘public library’ is described in *OSA*, 4: 391.

<sup>22</sup> Murray, *Literary History of Galloway*, 199.

<sup>23</sup> Wigtown Minutes; for a detailed breakdown of committee members, see M. Towsey, “First Steps in Associational Reading: Book Use and Sociability at the Wigtown Subscription Library, 1795–1799”, *PBSA*, 103 (2009), 455–95.

<sup>24</sup> Phillipson, “Culture”; Sher, *Church and University*.

<sup>25</sup> For the relationship between the Scottish Enlightenment and the universities, see Sher, *Church and University*; P. Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century* (1993); Emerson, *Professors, Patronage and Politics*.

Nevertheless, elements of society not usually associated with Enlightenment also subscribed to associational libraries in this period – those who St Clair suggests “were probably the first generation in their families to have had regular access to newly published books, new entrants of the reading nation who had probably read nothing except old-canon authors and school books before they joined”.<sup>26</sup> The founders of the Forfar Subscription Library, for instance, included a baker, a brewer, a cobbler and a watchmaker, as well as twelve merchants, and just one clergyman – Reverend John Webster, a St Andrews University graduate and the son of a former Bailie of Forfar.<sup>27</sup> The Ayr Library Society, meanwhile, embraced 32 merchants, three tanners, two bakers, two cabinet makers, and one tailor.<sup>28</sup> If merchants and tradesmen provided the rank and file of many subscription libraries, so too did tenant farmers drawn from each library’s rural hinterland. The Selkirk Subscription Library included 18 tenant farmers,<sup>29</sup> while 63 subscribed to the Duns Subscription Library in its first thirty years – accounting for roughly a quarter of each society’s total membership.<sup>30</sup> The Kirkcudbright Library, like many others, combined the rural and urban elements of provincial society, subscribers decreeing from the outset that the managerial committee be split formally between the two. The first committee featured John Buchanan, surveyor of the customs, writer Matthew Buchanan, surgeon John Walker and Reverend Robert Muter “for the town”, and Reverend John Scott of Twynholm and farmers John Ewart, David Maitland and John McNaught “for the country”.<sup>31</sup>

By contrast, many subscription libraries also attracted a smattering of support from men associated with Scotland’s burgeoning industries. The Dundee Public Library, for instance, counted 13 manufacturers amongst a total membership of around 200, while the Kilmarnock Subscription Library had 10. Subscription libraries associated with the lead mining works at Leadhills and Wanlockhead and the antimony mine at Westerkirk have come to be synonymous with the ‘Democratic

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<sup>26</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 250.

<sup>27</sup> *Regulations and Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Forfar Library 1st May 1795* (Dundee, 1795).

<sup>28</sup> Ayr Minutes.

<sup>29</sup> Scottish Borders Archives and Local History Centre S/PL/7/1 and 2, Selkirk Subscription Library Registers, 1799–1808 and Daybook, 1808–1814.

<sup>30</sup> Duns Proceedings.

<sup>31</sup> Kirkcudbright Minutes.

Intellect' in Scotland, and associational readers in Leadhills in the late 1740s included the blacksmith John Wilson and the leadwasher John Weir.<sup>32</sup> In the small manufacturing village of Renton, near Dumbarton, library subscribers were mostly drawn from the local printworks and bleachfields.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, subscription libraries and book clubs often came to be formed later in our period exclusively by and for working men.<sup>34</sup> John McAdam, who eventually became a well known reform activist and campaigner for Italian unity, recalled a book club he had joined in the 1820s while working as a cart driver and apprentice shoemaker in Port Dundas, Glasgow: "During my few spare hours I had ample means of indulging my passion of reading... The members, mainly Calton weavers and warpers, were very indulgent, giving me often first choice of books."<sup>35</sup>

Finally, it is also clear that some subscription libraries could allow a role for women in the intellectual culture of provincial Scotland.<sup>36</sup> Of course, they were not encouraged everywhere; there were no female members of the subscription libraries at Hawick and Forfar, for instance.<sup>37</sup> Also, it was perfectly possible for women to become members of subscription libraries by default, inheriting their share from deceased relatives, as was evidently the case for the three female members of the Kirkcudbright Subscription Library.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere, though, subscription libraries welcomed women on their own terms: the Wigtown Subscription Library had 7 women in a total membership of

<sup>32</sup> Crawford, "Leadhills Library".

<sup>33</sup> Dumbarton Library, Minute Book of the Renton Library.

<sup>34</sup> See above, footnote 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Autobiography of John McAdam (1806–1883) with Selected Letters*, ed. J. Fyfe (Edinburgh, Scottish History Society, 1980), 3; ODNB.

<sup>36</sup> For women in eighteenth-century Scotland, see R. K. Marshall, *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from 1080 to 1980* (London, 1983), especially Ch.10; K. Glover, "The Female Mind: Scottish Enlightenment Femininity and the World of Letters. A Case Study of the Women of the Fletcher of Saltoun Family in the Mid-Eighteenth Century", *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 25 (2005), 1–20; W. W. Knox, *The Lives of Scottish Women: Women and Scottish Society 1800–1980* (Edinburgh, 2006); J. Rendall, "Clio, Mars and Minerva: The Scottish Enlightenment and the Writing of Women's History", in T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (1999).

<sup>37</sup> *Hawick Subscription Library: List of Present Proprietors of Hawick Library, and Catalogue of the Library* (Hawick, [1810?]); *Forfar Catalogue*.

<sup>38</sup> Kirkcudbright Minutes. Duns Subscription Library regulations on the transference of shares were typical: "It shall be in each proprietors power to transfer his share, at his pleasure; and if not transferred, at his death, it shall descend to his heirs", Duns Proceedings, 3.



63, for instance, while Hamilton had 21 female members and Ayr, 52.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, though women were generally excluded from the management of subscription libraries, the Ayr Library Society appointed a female librarian in 1805.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, when women were admitted as members, they could exploit lending facilities with all the enthusiasm of their male counterparts. Five women borrowers at Wigtown accounted for 150 loans between 1796 and 1799, out of a total of 898 for the whole association.<sup>41</sup>

As “one of the few quasi-public places where respectable women could go alone”,<sup>42</sup> subscription libraries could therefore allow women to explore new roles in society, enabling some to participate personally in the overwhelmingly masculine culture of the Scottish Enlightenment. But they also allowed women to become readers in ways much less accessible to the historian – whether this be in borrowing books under a husband’s or a father’s name, or in the sort of scene frequently depicted in contemporary literature of reading as a communal family experience. Indeed, the founders of subscription libraries usually took these circumstances into account, with members of the Kirkcudbright Library proposing:

That if a member shall lend any book or books which he has from the Library he shall pay a fine of five shillings for the first offence, ten shillings for the second, and in case of a third offence he shall be struck off from the society altogether. But this law is not to extend to those who live within the family of the subscriber.<sup>43</sup>

The proposal was approved without comment, ensuring that male subscribers’ wives, mothers, sisters, aunts and daughters were at least as important as female subscribers in gendering associational reading.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Wigtown Borrowing Book; *Hamilton Subscribers*; Ayr Minutes. Allan finds a similar story in English subscription libraries and book clubs, with women being excluded from some libraries but making up as much as 20% of the membership in others; Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 39–40, 78–82. Such evidence counters traditional claims that women were excluded from associational reading: Raven, “Libraries”, 251, 254; St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 250.

<sup>40</sup> Ayr Minutes.

<sup>41</sup> Wigtown Borrowing Book; Towsey, “First Steps in Associational Reading”.

<sup>42</sup> Pearson, *Women’s Reading*, 161.

<sup>43</sup> Kirkcudbright Minutes.

<sup>44</sup> Jan Fergus calculates that around a quarter of all female magazine readers were “concealed” in records surviving for a small group of booksellers in the English midlands; *Provincial Readers*, 35, 209–11.

## III

Mention of borrowing returns us to the primary function of these institutions, the provision of books on a collective basis to groups of readers who usually could not afford an extensive library of their own. Given this, an obvious place to start in assessing their contribution to the reception of the Scottish Enlightenment is to ask which books they tended to stock.<sup>45</sup> In fundamental ways, and for very good reasons, the holdings of associational libraries reflected personal ownership patterns outlined in Chapter One. Polite historiography was once more the pre-eminent genre, and Robertson's works joined Hume's *History* as the most widely distributed books of any kind in associational collections. They were usually joined by Scottish conjectural history, with the likes of Kames's *Sketches*, Ferguson's *Essay*, Millar's *Distinction of Ranks* and *Historical View* and Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* being very widely available. All of these titles were equally popular in England,<sup>46</sup> but subscription libraries often offered regional historiography that was far less readily available south of the border such as Shaw's *History of Moray*, Ridpath's *Border History*, Ure's *History of Rutherglen*, Semple's edition of Crawford's *History of Renfrewshire*, Gibson's *History of Glasgow* and especially Arnot's *History of Edinburgh*. Indeed, David Allan has argued convincingly that the curators of the Perth Library "wished to impose a coherent institutional acquisitions policy" that stressed the cultural significance of "Provincial Histories – by which are understood the histories of particular Counties, Parishes, Cities, Towns, Villages, Monuments of Antiquity etc."<sup>47</sup> The prevalence of such works in other subscription library catalogues would therefore suggest that the Perth cultural manifesto may have been shared by associational readers as far afield as Orkney, Fort William, Greenock and Duns.

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<sup>45</sup> This survey is based on an analysis of 51 surviving catalogues. Many are listed in Alston; J. C. Crawford, "The Bibliography of Printed Catalogues Issued by publicly available libraries in Scotland, 1765–1930: an analysis of the database," *The Bibliothek* 23 (1998), 27–48. For more detailed analysis, see M. Towsey, "'All Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading them': the Distribution of Enlightenment Books in Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750–c.1820," *Journal of the Scottish Historical Society*, 28 (2008), 20–43.

<sup>46</sup> For subscription libraries in England, see Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 99–106.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted by Allan, "Provincial Readers", 380.

In philosophy, associational readers habitually bought many works that were characteristic of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Smith's *Moral Sentiments* and the works of Reid, Beattie and Stewart – probably as 'standard' texts that any respectable library collection should possess. The presence of Hume's *Essays and Treatises* in roughly two-thirds of catalogues also gave them a digest of his main works, as we have seen, including access to the *Principles of Morals*, the *Enquiry on the Human Understanding*, the *Political Discourses* and, from 1757, the *Four Dissertations*, as well as the impeccably Addisonian *Essays Moral and Political*. It is a more convoluted picture for the headline works of the scientific Enlightenment in Scotland. The near total absence of medical works merely reflected the policy habitually adopted that specialist vocational material should be avoided to save the collection from being hijacked by particular interest groups.<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that associational readers were disinterested in science more generally, however. Members were encouraged to come to terms with Newtonian science by the common acquisition of MacLaurin's *Account of Newton* and Ferguson's *Astronomy*, and catalogues also reflected associational readers' pragmatic interest in agricultural improvement by the inclusion of works such as Kames's *Gentleman Farmer*, Dickson's *Treatise* and Anderson's *Essays on Agriculture*. Polite interest in natural history was reflected in the popularity of Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History*, as well as his translation of Buffon's *Natural History*, while associational readers' support for pioneering Scottish Enlightenment science was demonstrated by their relative enthusiasm for Hutton's *Theory of the Earth* – which together with Playfair's *Illustrations* enjoyed a distribution profile in associational library catalogues out of all proportion to their distribution in other types of library. Institutions like the Greenock Subscription Library, later known as the Watt Library in honour of eighteenth-century Scotland's greatest engineer, clearly conceived themselves as institutional sponsors of Scottish science at the cutting edge of contemporary research.

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<sup>48</sup> Subscribers to the Kilmarnock Library agreed that "books of the most utility to the members in general are to be preferred to those which respect particular professions, party work or controversy"; rule 8 of the Duns Subscription Library's constitution decreed that "no books professedly wrote upon any subject in Divinity, Law or Physick shall on any account be purchased and all books shall be in the English language".

## IV

Surviving catalogues therefore suggest that associational readers in Scotland identified themselves squarely with important elements of the Scottish Enlightenment, often, though not always, reflecting reading tastes across Britain as a whole. However, as one recent commentator on the history of reading has advised “conclusions based upon analyses of library catalogues must remain highly speculative”, for the very reasons discussed at length in Chapter One.<sup>49</sup> Most fundamentally, catalogues can give no proof that the particular books which interest us were even taken off the library shelves, an especially acute problem when we are dealing with collections that potentially represented the preferences of multiple interest groups – as was patently the case at most subscription libraries in Scotland.

By all means, scraps of documentary evidence suggest that members did indeed borrow Scottish Enlightenment works. A long list of books apparently ‘lost’ from the Duns Subscription Library compiled in April 1798 included Robertson’s *History of Scotland* and Ferguson’s *Essay*, while Blair’s *Lectures* and Kames’s *Sketches* were returned in an amnesty on overdue books held later that year.<sup>50</sup> Damage was also frequently reported, as when committee members of the Dunfermline Subscription Library expressed concern over damage caused to a copy of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* by one William Yule, the same borrower who had earlier been accused of returning Arnot’s *History of Edinburgh* with missing plates.<sup>51</sup> The clerk of the Dundee Public Library, meanwhile, reported in September 1797 that:

The Librarian presented the 2nd volume of Essays by Mr. D. Hume Esq. which had lost 16 pages of the notes at the end of the book. But after examining the persons who had lately read the book, the committee could not ascertain by whom or in what way the book had lost the same.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jan Fergus, “Provincial Servants’ Reading in the Late Eighteenth Century”, in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), 158.

<sup>50</sup> Duns Proceedings, 25 April 1798.

<sup>51</sup> Dunfermline Local History Library, Carnegie Library, Dunfermline: D/Lib, Minute Books of the Dunfermline Subscription Library, 1789–1829; minute dated 18 February 1794.

<sup>52</sup> Dundee Public Library Minutes, 26 September 1797. Surviving catalogues for the Dundee Public Library do not reveal whether this refers to Hume’s *Essays Moral and*

Whether or not the Dundee managers were right in presuming that those who had *borrowed* Hume's *Essays* had therefore *read* them, institutional borrowing records, in the extremely rare instances where they survive, do help to establish the broader "reading vogues" of subscribers – according to Kaufman's hugely influential study of the most extensive surviving records for an English subscription library. Although the Bristol Library Association was hardly typical given its size and affluent clientele, not to mention its location in one of the foremost commercial ports in eighteenth-century Europe, the historiography of Hume, Robertson, Watson and Henry dominated borrowings there in the 1780s. They were joined in tabulations of the most popular texts by specialist works such as Blackwell's *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*, Kames's *Sketches* and Alexander's *History of Women*.<sup>53</sup> A number of little-known sources in provincial Scotland provide a Scottish comparison. The most extensive borrowing registers to survive belong to the Selkirk Subscription Library, founded in 1772 and the property of a healthy mix of urban professionals and tenant farmers drawn from a wide hinterland. The registers cover a fifteen year period between 1799 and 1814, during which around 12,000 loans were recorded by 68 members.<sup>54</sup>

Borrowers included at least ten landowners, led by the prolific Andrew Henderson Esq. of Midgehope, whose 402 borrowings featured Beattie's *Essay on Truth* and Hume's *Essays*, Blair's *Lectures* and Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and the historiography of Hume, Robertson and Henry. Also heavily indebted to the library's collections were eight ministers from the local Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, including Robert Douglas (1747–1820), "Father of Galashiels",<sup>55</sup> whose 191 borrowings included Mackenzie's novels and Robert Russell (1768–1847) of Yarrow, who borrowed Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Stewart's lives of Robertson and Reid, and MacQueen's *Letters on Hume's History* among 93 other items. Most prolific of all,

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*Political or the Essays and Treatises*. The same work was purposefully removed from the library of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society in 1796; Flavell, "Liverpool Library", 23.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1773–1784: A Unique Record of Reading Vogues* (Charlottesville, VA, 1960), 9.

<sup>54</sup> The following analysis of the Selkirk borrowing registers is based on Selkirk Register and Day Book; *Catalogue of the Selkirk Library, instituted 1777* (Selkirk, 1856).

<sup>55</sup> *Fasti*.

however, was George Lawson, minister of the Anti-Burgher congregation at Selkirk and Professor of Theology at the Associate Synod's Theological Hall.<sup>56</sup> Lawson's 1,557 loans represent an appropriate record for a man renowned in his own time as the "Scottish Socrates", and featured 87 numbers of the *Annual Register*, 12 of the *Edinburgh Review*, 18 loans of the *Statistical Account*, 17 of Hume's *History*, seven loans of the *Lounger* and six of Robertson's *Charles V.*<sup>57</sup>

Among other borrowers' occupations that can be safely identified, a further 18 were tenant farmers, and these included Robert Laidlaw of Peel (528 loans including 24 separate loans of various volumes of Hume's *History*), Henry Scott of Deloraine (352 loans including Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, Hutcheson's *Inquiry* and Campbell *On Miracles*, as well as Reid's *Inquiry* and *Essays*), and George Park, brother of the African explorer Mungo (154 loans including Tytler's *Enquiry* and Robertson's *America*).<sup>58</sup> As was the case at associational libraries throughout England and Scotland, urban professionals and tradesmen were also important at Selkirk, notably Andrew Lang, sheriff clerk of Selkirkshire (112 loans covering an array of subject matter including Dickson's *Treatise*, Hailes's *Annals*, Beattie's *Elements* and the poetry of Thomas Blacklock), the schoolmaster James Scott (82 loans including Blair's *Lectures* and Duff *On Genius*, as well as Hume's *History*, Ferguson's *Essay* and Ridpath's *Border History*), the surgeon Andrew Thomson (311 loans including the works of Reid and Hutcheson) and the tanner John Anderson (whose 305 loans took in the plays of John Home, the poetry of Burns and Scott, and the novels of Mackenzie and Smollett, besides Montesquieu, Rousseau, Robertson and Gerard).

Taken together in Table 2.1, the loan records of subscribers at Selkirk do seem to corroborate the reading preferences discovered at the Bristol Library Association by Paul Kaufman, certainly in the popularity of history. Hume's *History* is the clear leader as far as works associated

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<sup>56</sup> *Lawson*; ODNB. For the complicated history of the eighteenth-century Scottish Kirk and its numerous secession churches, see R. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church From 1733 to 1900*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1904).

<sup>57</sup> *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730–1860*, 2 vols (ed. D. M. Lewis, Oxford, 1995). Chalmers wrote of Lawson, "no simple-minded more perfect lover of wisdom do I know of in that generation", *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*; *Lawson*.

<sup>58</sup> The Park family were members of Lawson's Burgher congregation; *Lawson*, 67–9.

Table 2.1. Books borrowed from the Selkirk Subscription Library, 1799–1814 (works borrowed 30 times or more)

Author, <i>title</i>	Number of borrowings	Number of borrowers
<i>Annual Register</i>	161	28
Hume, <i>History</i>	109	30
Burns, <i>Poems</i>	80	37
Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i>	68	13
<i>Arabian Nights</i>	60	29
Johnson, <i>Works</i>	58	25
<i>Canterbury Tales</i>	56	30
Shakespeare	56	21
Park, <i>Travels</i>	54	29
<i>Edward</i>	50	28
Gibbon, <i>Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i>	49	19
Sinclair, <i>Statistical Account</i>	47	13
Scott, <i>Border Minstrelsy</i>	44	27
Goldsmith, <i>History of England</i>	44	21
<i>Edinburgh Review</i>	43	17
<i>Embassy to Asia</i>	42	28
Goldsmith, <i>Works</i>	42	21
<i>Beggar Girl</i>	40	25
Rollin, <i>Ancient History</i>	40	17
Edgeworth, <i>Modern Philosophers</i>	39	25
Burney, <i>Evelina</i>	38	23
Mackenzie, <i>Julia de Roubigné</i>	37	25
<i>Don Quixote</i>	37	16
<i>Camilla</i>	36	22
Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i>	34	22
Fielding, <i>Works</i>	34	18
Smollett, <i>Roderick Random</i>	31	19
Mackenzie, <i>Man of Feeling</i>	30	22
<i>Lounger</i>	30	19
Laing, <i>History of Scotland</i>	30	17

with the Scottish Enlightenment are concerned, registering 109 loans in the period covered by the surviving records – second only to the periodical *Annual Register* in circulation, whose various numbers were borrowed on 161 separate occasions at Selkirk and offered readers

ready-made opinions on a wide variety of books.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the pre-eminence of this long-established bastion of Georgian critical culture amongst Selkirk readers immediately sheds light on the question highlighted in Chapter One regarding the ways in which consumers' choices were shaped, and is entirely symptomatic of taste formation at Scottish subscription libraries, as we shall see.

Even so, Hume's *History* was actually withdrawn by more readers than the *Annual Register*, and its thirty borrowers included a wide cross section of Selkirk subscribers – nine farmers, four ministers, four writers and the Library's three surgeons, as well as the landowner and industrialist Walter Dunlop of Whitmuirhall, the Selkirk magistrate Bailie James Robson, Colonel William Russell and the schoolmaster Scott. Of Scottish historiography, only Henry's *History* came close to matching the frequency with which Hume was withdrawn from the Library, being taken out on 68 occasions by thirteen different borrowers – who included four farmers, two esquires, two ministers, two writers and a surgeon. Here we immediately see the value of looking not only at the overall figure for borrowings of each title, but also at the number of individuals who withdrew a title – a seemingly simple refinement of the borrowing statistics, but one with great significance when we consider that Hume's *History* usually came in six or eight volumes and Henry's in six.<sup>60</sup>

In stark contrast to the Bristol Library, where it was outperformed by both the *History of the Reign of Charles V* and the *History of America*, the *History of Scotland* was far and away the most frequently borrowed of Robertson's historical works, with none of the others making much impression.<sup>61</sup> This significant contrast appears to offer yet more proof that Scottish readers displayed a pronounced preference for explicitly Scottish material. Again, the social distribution of Robertson's borrowers took in the full array of groupings at the Selkirk Library: borrowers

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<sup>59</sup> Hume's *History* registered 180 loans at Bristol between 1773 and 1784 (the fourth highest score in Kaufman's analysis). On the critical press, see F. Donoghue, *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers* (Stanford, 1996) and Engell, *Critical Mind*.

<sup>60</sup> Kaufman highlighted this point; Paul Kaufman, *Reading Vogues at English Cathedral Libraries of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1963–1964); idem., *Bristol Library*, 127; and idem., "A Unique Record of a People's Reading," *Libri*, 14 (1964–1965), 234.

<sup>61</sup> See Kaufman, *Bristol Library*, 123: *Charles V* had 131 loans, *History of America* 111 and *History of Scotland* 59. Robertson was distinguished in the Bristol analysis for being the only author to have three works borrowed more than fifty times each.



of the *History of Scotland*, for example, included six farmers, three ministers, two landowners, two surgeons, two writers, a banker and a tanner, while five readers borrowed the three major histories – two farmers, two ministers and the surgeon Thomas Scott. Only the exceptional Reverend Lawson borrowed Robertson's late *Historical Disquisition on Ancient India* (1791) alongside his three major histories.

The great legends of the Scottish past also appealed to Selkirk readers – not least Mary Queen of Scots, seemingly neutralised as a figure of political discord by Robertson, Hume et al. That did not stop eleven Selkirk subscribers (all laymen) from borrowing Tytler's "Vindication" (their shorthand in the borrowing register for Tytler's *Inquiry* was revealing in itself), including six who had also borrowed Robertson.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, some Selkirk readers were also enthused by Scottish regional historiography, certainly in the form of Arnot's *Edinburgh* (borrowed by nine individuals, including four farmers, two ministers, a surgeon and a writer) and Nimmo's *Stirlingshire* (five loanees, three farmers, plus Reverend Lawson and the surgeon Scott) – though they could not be accused of being narrowly parochial, with only two borrowing Ridpath's *Border History*.

However, Selkirk readers seem to have been relatively uninterested in conjectural history. *The Wealth of Nations* was borrowed by seven individuals (though nobody borrowed it more than once, despite its multi-volume format),<sup>63</sup> while Ferguson's *Essay* and Kames's *Sketches* each had six borrowers – putting them on a par with Robertson's relatively obscure *India*. Millar's more technical *Distinction of Ranks* created even less of a stir, borrowed by just three individuals in fifteen years, as was Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, the prime inspiration for Scottish conjectural history. Indeed, the only sign that this brand of social history defined by its wide historical sweep and philosophical emphasis had any kind of wide-ranging appeal in this corner of provincial Scotland is the frequency with which William Alexander's pioneering *History of Women* was borrowed, 21 times by sixteen individuals – who included five farmers, three country squires and two

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<sup>62</sup> L. L. Bongie, "The Eighteenth-Century Marian Controversy and an Unpublished Letter by David Hume", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 1 (1963–1964); O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*.

<sup>63</sup> This perhaps reflects contemporary comments about the technical difficulty of *The Wealth of Nations*; see below, Chapter Five.

writers, as well as Colonel Russell, the surgeon Anderson and, of course, the distinguished Reverend Lawson.<sup>64</sup>

In spite of their relative lack of interest in the distinctive theoretical historiography of the Scottish Enlightenment, Selkirk readers did follow its key philosophical debates (beyond the satirical sideswipe at the excesses of modern metaphysics that was Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of the Modern Philosophers* – borrowed 39 times by 25 individuals). Smith's *Moral Sentiments* was withdrawn from the library room by nine individuals, including four farmers, a writer, a surgeon, the Reverend Lawson and Mark Pringle Esq. – who also borrowed Smith's *Philosophical Essays*. Beattie's *Essay on Truth* was borrowed 18 times by 15 individuals and was thus considerably more popular than Reid's cerebral *Inquiry* (borrowed six times) and *Essays* (11) – in keeping with the more bombastic and avowedly populist style in which Beattie got to grips with Hume's notorious scepticism. As for 'The Great Infidel' himself, Hume's *Essays and Treatises* were withdrawn 14 times by 10 different readers, with only two borrowing the posthumous and hugely controversial *Dialogues of Natural Religion*.<sup>65</sup> The farmers James Grieve and John Murray borrowed the *Essays* three and two times respectively, while other borrowers included the schoolmaster Scott, the writer Rodger and the Reverend Lawson – noticeably the sole minister to show any interest in Hume's philosophy. As at Bristol, Scottish aesthetics was particularly popular: the 12 borrowers of Blair's *Lectures* included four farmers, two ministers, a surgeon, a writer and a schoolmaster, while Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Alison's *Essays on Taste* were each borrowed by nine Selkirk subscribers. Reverend Lawson, of course, borrowed all three, as well as Kames's *Elements* and Gerard *On Genius*.<sup>66</sup> Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, an important precursor of Blair, Campbell et al, attracted 10 borrowers (including a schoolmaster and four farmers), four of whom also borrowed his closely related *Essay*.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander's *History of Women* had been borrowed sixteen times in the first three years it was available at Bristol; Kaufman, *Bristol Library*.

<sup>65</sup> The earliest surviving catalogue for the Selkirk collection confirms that this was the *Essays and Treatises*; *Selkirk Catalogue*. "When American writers attacked Hume's philosophy, they did so because Hume's philosophy was being read"; Spencer, *Hume's Reception*, 2: 83.

<sup>66</sup> Blair's *Lectures* was borrowed 25 times in the first period it was available at the Bristol Library (1782–1784), though Kames's *Elements of Criticism* recorded slightly more loans overall (30 between 1773 and 1784). Gerard's *Essay on Taste* was borrowed 12 times and his *Essay on Genius* ten times; Kaufman, *Bristol Library*.

Poetry was noticeable for its relative absence from the Bristol borrowing registers, prompting Kaufman to speculate that a fair proportion of its members may already have owned copies of Burns, Ossian and Thomson.<sup>67</sup> But at Selkirk, poetry joined novels and plays in making imaginative literature far and away the most popular type of literature – accounting for around a third of all loans in the period for which records survive. Scott naturally made an immediate impact, particularly so in a community where the author was personally well known and (for those who were not in on the secret) where the *Border Minstrelsy* had especially strong local appeal. The very different poetic qualities of Beattie and ‘Ossian’ Macpherson also had a solid following. Indeed, it is probable that such individuals were inspired to read Ossian and *The Minstrel* by the earnest recommendations of the Scottish rhetoricians, reflecting once more the processes by which literary taste was formed amongst Scottish provincial readers. The farmer James Laidlaw had already borrowed Kames’s *Elements*, Blair’s *Lectures* and Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* before he turned to Ossian (all made liberal use of Macpherson’s spurious translations to illuminate their highly influential dictates on good taste), while Andrew Henderson Esq. borrowed Ossian, Beattie and Burns only after returning Gerard, Campbell and Blair.

The profile of Burns’s *Poems* was even more impressive, borrowed by 37 individuals who more often than not returned to borrow Burns a second or third time. The writer George Rodger and Reverend Lawson borrowed Burns seven times each, while the farmers Robert and James Laidlaw, who could no doubt most easily identify with the homely world view so eloquently illuminated by the renowned Kilmarnock farmer, were each marked down for Burns four times. Overall, twelve farmers, four ministers, four writers, three surgeons, a tanner and a schoolmaster borrowed Burns, as well as the solitary female subscriber to appear in the borrowing register. We may surmise that the private cajoling of other members’ wives and daughters accounted for the regularity with which their menfolk returned to the library for copies of Burns, but his huge popularity probably owed at least as much to

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<sup>67</sup> In highlighting the apparent lack of Bristolian interest in Thomson’s *Seasons* (4 borrowers overall), Kaufman suggested that this “could be explained by their presence in private libraries”; *Bristol Library*, 126. The Kilmarnock edition of Burns’s *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* was originally priced at 3s.; Macpherson’s *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* was sold for 1s.; Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 630–1, 668–9.

the whole-hearted recommendations of his work by the Scottish belletrists, especially Blair.

## V

One problem with the Selkirk registers is that they relate to a period when the library was already well established, and where some subscribers discussed here may well have been borrowing books for ten, twenty or even thirty years. The Selkirk Subscription Library itself had been founded in 1770, so borrowing statistics may be skewed by the fact that the library pre-dated many works that were being most frequently borrowed between 1799 and 1814 – including *The Wealth of Nations*, Robertson's *History of America*, Blair's *Lectures* and Burns's *Poems*. Moreover, some of the most popular books – notably Hume's *History*, which would most likely have been amongst the first books the Selkirk Library acquired – had almost certainly been available to proprietors of the library for at least twenty years before 1799, so the borrowing statistics that we can derive from the existing records in all likelihood underestimate their true circulation.

Such problems do not complicate our impression of borrowings from the Wigtown Subscription Library, founded in the south-western corner of Scotland in September 1795, whose surviving records provide a unique opportunity to glimpse book use at a British subscription library in the first five years of its existence. Of 898 loans in total, the profile of notable periodical works such as the *Annual Register*, the *Critical Review* and especially the *Monthly Review* is particularly suggestive, as is Bell's collected edition of the best of *British Theatre* and Johnson's *Lives* – all works that offered critical guidance on choosing books (Table 2.2). Novels were popular, especially Fielding's *Works* and Moore's *Zeluco*, as were the bestselling travel books of Cook, Coxe and Bruce.<sup>68</sup> And of course, historiography was held in particularly high esteem at Wigtown as at libraries elsewhere in Britain – especially historiography that combined a cosmopolitan taste for the exotic with a compelling model for amateur scholarship, such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Raynal's *West Indies*, Savary's *Egypt* and Gillies's *Greece*.

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<sup>68</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840: "From an Antique Land"* (Oxford, 2002); K. Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe, 1750–1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity* (Aldershot, 2001).

Noticeably, though, there was no sign of religion in the preferences of subscribers to the Wigtown Library in these early years. We can safely assume that most Wigtown subscribers would have had access to a Bible and perhaps a volume or two of collected sermons by other means. But the complete exclusion of devotional reading from their borrowing habits contrasts considerably with the prominence of religious texts at subscription libraries in Sheffield, Lancaster, Leeds and Lewes which were characterised by a coterie of Protestant dissenters amongst their members.<sup>69</sup>

Wigtown subscribers did, of course, include some extraordinary local dignitaries, but as we have already seen – and typically for subscription libraries across the country – these individuals rarely involved themselves in day-to-day library affairs. The 8th Earl of Galloway may have signed up as a founding subscriber but he does not appear in any of the surviving borrowing records. Nor does the army captain and laird of Castlewrig, John Hathorn, who despite his initial patronage, actually defaulted on subscription payments and was duly struck off as a member. Meanwhile, Sir William Maxwell baronet of Monreith and Lady Maxwell registered just four loans between them and another major local landholder, William McConnell, Commissary Principal of the Commissariat of Wigtownshire, who donated a substantial proportion of his own collection to the library soon after its foundation, recorded just thirteen loans in total.<sup>70</sup>

The eight Church of Scotland ministers involved in the Library's foundation were much more prolific borrowers, especially John Graham of Kirkinner (a contributor to the *Statistical Account* whose 33 loans included Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History* and six volumes of Henry's *History*). Seven lawyers were also amongst the most frequent borrowers, such as John Dalzeil (a founding member who only borrowed seven books, including *Fingal*), as well as five medical men, led by Robert Moodie (whose 33 loans featured Arnot's *Edinburgh* and Stewart's *Elements*). Three merchants were keen borrowers, notably Ebenezer Drew (71 borrowings, surveying the historiography of Hume,

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<sup>69</sup> Allan, "Amicable Society", 66; D. Waley and Jeremy Gorin, "Lewes Library Society: The Early Years, 1785–1831", *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 138 (2000), 154; Sara E. Joynes, "The Sheffield Library, 1771–1907", *LH*, 2 (1970–1972), 91–116. See also Paul Kaufman, "Zion's Temple, Manchester: an Introduction to Libraries of Dissent", *PBSA*, 62 (1968), 337–47; Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, 176–8.

<sup>70</sup> The extent and quality of McConnell's donation is not made clear in the library's minutes, though expressions of thanks are voted to him on more than one occasion.

Table 2.2. Books borrowed from the Wigtown Subscription Library, 1796–1799 (works borrowed 10 times or more)

Author, title	Number of borrowings	Number of borrowers
Bell, <i>British Theatre</i>	90	23
Gibbon, <i>Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i>	79	16
Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i>	53	14
Fielding, <i>Works</i>	53	12
Cook, <i>Voyages</i>	52	11
Gillies, <i>History of Ancient Greece</i>	37	11
Smollett, <i>History of England</i>	33	11
Hume, <i>History</i>	31	7
<i>Monthly Review</i>	30	14
Johnson, <i>Lives of the British Poets</i>	24	8
<i>Annual Register</i>	23	11
<i>Fool of Quality</i>	23	6
Cox, <i>Travels</i>	22	10
Raynal, <i>West Indies</i>	21	6
Moore, <i>Zeluco</i>	20	12
Robertson, <i>Charles V</i>	19	6
Rousseau, <i>Eloisa</i>	18	7
Watson, <i>Philip II</i>	16	6
Arnot, <i>History of Edinburgh</i>	12	11
Knox, <i>Essays</i>	12	8
Moore, <i>View of Society</i>	12	7
Lyttleton, <i>Henry the Second</i>	12	5
Guthrie, <i>General History of Scotland</i>	11	9
<i>Critical Review</i>	11	8
Savary, <i>Egypt</i>	11	7
Watson, <i>Philip III</i>	11	5
Volney, <i>Travels</i>	10	7
[Mackenzie et al] <i>The Mirror</i>	10	5
Smollett, <i>Roderick Random</i>	10	4

Henry, Robertson and Watson), plus three factors, such as William Mure (factor to Lord Selkirk, who borrowed Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, as well as eight other items). Finally, there were two accountants, the banker Matthew Campbell (whose 41 borrowings surveyed the historiography of Henry, Robertson, Hume, Gibbon, Raynal and Savary), the exciseman James Tweedale (who borrowed two numbers of the

*Mirror* as well as Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History*), the tailor John McGill (who also borrowed Smellie amongst 59 loans overall, alongside Adam Smith's posthumous *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, Watson's *Philip II* and Gillies's *History of Ancient Greece*) and the vintner Alexander Murray (whose premises provided a fittingly convivial stage for the society's meetings, and who registered 36 loans including Robertson's *History of Scotland*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Fool of Quality*, *Gil Blas* and Smollett's *Roderick Random*).

As will already be clear, the same kind of Scottish Enlightenment texts that performed well at Selkirk also had widespread appeal at Wigtown. Henry's *History* was the clear favourite this time, borrowed by 14 individuals who included six ministers, two accountants, two bankers and two surgeons. Owing to the meticulous organisation of the surviving register, it is also possible to pinpoint the specific volumes they borrowed. Andrew Douglas, an accountant, borrowed the first two volumes of Henry's *History*, which ran from the Romans up to the Norman Conquest, but was insufficiently impressed to take out its subsequent volumes.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, Reverend John Dickson (1748–1799), minister of Kirkcowan, followed up his initial interest in the first volume of Henry's *History* by borrowing the next four volumes in two subsequent visits, while Ebenezer Drew and Samuel Shortridge eventually borrowed the complete set – although not in strict succession, since “the completion of a work could be a long and fragmented process” when subscribers were in competition with each other to secure their first choice volumes from the library.<sup>72</sup>

For certain texts, most obviously David Hume's hugely popular but inevitably controversial *History of England*, such inconsistent borrowing patterns reveal more about their public reception. Although Hume's *History* was regularly taken off the library shelves at Wigtown, only two subscribers borrowed all eight volumes in the set, with most readers

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<sup>71</sup> Fergus terms this “desultory reading”, and warns that it does not necessarily mean that a reader did not like the book in question, since they could have finished it at a time not covered by the surviving records; *Provincial Readers*, 110; 239–40.

<sup>72</sup> This was a characteristic hazard of borrowing multi-volume books from a subscription library. At the Sheffield Book Society (also in the 1790s), the apprentice cutlery manufacturer Joseph Hunter “sometimes read the volumes of a text in a different order than was intended by the author, and...on occasion he had to wait for the relevant volume to be returned by another reader in order to complete a title”; Colclough, *Consuming Texts*, 106.

treating it much more selectively. By far the most popular volumes were the two which dealt with the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution – thus covering a critical period in seventeenth-century history when British politics first came to be divided along Whig-Tory lines. Those who thereby restricted their exposure to Hume (who included the merchant Alexander Drew as well as his heir and nephew Ebenezer) would seem to have used the Wigtown copy in much the same way as the law student David Boyle, who compiled an abridgement of Hume's Stuart volumes (considered at greater length in Chapters Seven and Eight) to familiarise himself with this crucial episode in recent political history. Conversely, only the two who completed the set, namely Robert McKeand and widow McCulloch, borrowed the Tudor volume of Hume's *History*, perhaps reflecting widespread provincial discontent about the obstinately secular account of the English Reformation which it contained. Remarkably, none of the clergymen associated with the library borrowed Hume, an intriguing detail in the reading preferences of Church of Scotland ministers who were otherwise such enthusiastic consumers (and producers) of polite historiography. Meanwhile, at least a dozen Wigtown subscribers borrowed Smollett's deceptively named *Continuation of Mr. Hume's History* without first borrowing Hume.<sup>73</sup> They presumably did so because of the more recent history on offer in the *Continuation*, or, more disconcertingly, because they hoped to avoid Hume's alleged Toryism and still more notorious irreligion.

Looking beyond historiography, and notwithstanding seven loans of Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History*, most other works of the Enlightenment received only a lukewarm reception in Wigtown. That said we must not forget that the library was in its infancy when these works were being borrowed, with the collection still quite limited. The seemingly poor reception afforded to *The Wealth of Nations*, borrowed only once in the years covered by the borrowing registers, may simply be explained by its late acquisition – its only borrower, after all, was himself a latecomer (Alexander Vance, laird of Barrachan, who first subscribed in October 1797). Moreover, the library continued to acquire texts through the 1800s and early 1810s that were considered

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<sup>73</sup> Tobias Smollett, *The history of England, from the Revolution to the death of George the Second. (Designed as a continuation of Mr. Hume's History...)*, 5 vols (London: Thomas Cadell, 1785). It was "marketed, through a sleight of hand, as a 'continuation' of Hume"; Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 169.



required reading at other libraries, including Robertson's *America*, Ferguson's *Essay*, Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Buffon's *Natural History* and the Kilmarnock edition of Burns.

## VI

All this highlights the questions of why particular books ended up in Scottish library collections, and how purchases came to be selected. Of course, there is a strong element of literary fashionability here, with most libraries explicitly attempting to build up a canonical collection of titles approved by the critics.<sup>74</sup> When a library was first established, it was common for founding members to send off a list of titles to book-sellers in Edinburgh, Glasgow and even London in an attempt to acquire books that were considered 'essential reading' at the best possible price.<sup>75</sup> This desire to establish a canonical collection of standard works was typically enshrined in the constitution of the Bridgeton Public Library founded on the outskirts of Glasgow in 1825 which stipulated that the collection should "consist of approved standard works, scientific and literary, with a selection from the new works of merit, and a few of the best periodical publications".<sup>76</sup> Additionally, they were not above emulating other collections – so that members of both the Greenock Subscription Library and the Paisley Library Society looked at least in part to catalogues of William Stirling's Library in nearby Glasgow to help inform the development of their own collections.<sup>77</sup>

More dramatically, books on taste (particularly those by Kames, Campbell and Blair) were often amongst the earliest acquisitions, helping both library managers (in deciding which books to order) and subscribers (in choosing which books to borrow). Periodical journals like the *Annual Register*, the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review*, the *Scots Magazine* and the second *Edinburgh Review* served as "dictionaries to

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<sup>74</sup> On canon formation, see Raven, "Libraries", 191–2; Allan, *Making British Culture*, 23–47.

<sup>75</sup> Duns Proceedings, 5 October 1768 and 7 December 1768; Dundee Public Library Minutes, 4 October 1796.

<sup>76</sup> *Regulations and Catalogue of the Bridgeton Public Library* (Glasgow, 1824).

<sup>77</sup> *Catalogue and Regulations of the Greenock Subscription Library* (Greenock, 1808); *Catalogue of Books and Regulations in the Paisley Library Society* (Paisley, 1822); *Catalogue of Books in Stirling's Public Library* (Glasgow, 1795). There are many more examples of direct emulation in English subscription libraries; Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 87.

both the latest publications in Britain and to how the critical world received them”.<sup>78</sup> They carried reviews of important works, listed recently released titles and often excerpted passages from popular authors – all vital services in an era, lest we forget, when readers could not browse the shelves of a well-stocked local bookshop over a leisurely coffee break.<sup>79</sup> In these circumstances, it is easy to see why these very journals so evidently became essential reading at Selkirk and Wigtown: as St Clair observes, “they were a way of enabling knowledge of newly published texts to circulate”, at the same time allowing library members to “feel themselves a part of a national as well as of a local reading community”.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, it is even possible to detect the influence of the reviewers in individual readers’ suggestions and reading choices.<sup>81</sup> Borrowers of the 1793 volumes of the *Monthly Review* at Wigtown (including the tailor McGill) could read a series of enthusiastic reviews of Dugald Stewart’s *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792), featuring substantial excerpts from the text as well as critical commentary on it.<sup>82</sup> The library acquired a copy soon after, which McGill borrowed as soon as it became available.

All these influences, then, help explain why certain books turn up so frequently in subscription library catalogues, because together they defined for Georgian Britain what Roger Chartier terms the “division between the books that one absolutely must possess and those that might (or must) be left aside”.<sup>83</sup> They confirm that associational readers in provincial Scotland increasingly saw themselves as part of a much wider “reading nation”, so far from obstinately ignoring literary triumphs on their doorstep that they actually relied on the literary strictures coming out of Glasgow, Edinburgh and especially London to

<sup>78</sup> J. Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748–1811* (Columbia, 2002), 221; Flavell, “Liverpool Library”, 18, 20.

<sup>79</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures*, 176; Antonia Forster, “Review Journals and the Reading Public”, I. Rivers (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London, 2001); J. Feather, “The Book Trade and Libraries”, in *CHLB2*; D. Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh: 1788–1802* (London, 1978), especially 24; Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison, 1987).

<sup>80</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 100, 254. Elsewhere, he is somewhat more sceptical about the actual influence of the periodical reviews; see, for example, 189.

<sup>81</sup> Colclough observes that “periodical reviews stimulated [Joseph] Hunter’s desire to see a particular text or to read a particular author”; *Consuming Texts*, 108.

<sup>82</sup> *The Monthly Review, or Literary Journal Enlarged*, vol. 10 (January–April, 1793), 59–64, 203–10 and 366–73; 373.

<sup>83</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, 65.

shape their intellectual horizons. However, there is also evidence to suggest that the desire for canonicity was not simply imitative but could also be emulative, with some institutions developing strategies that encouraged members to become critics in their own right. The members of the Paisley Library Society, founded in 1802, developed a particularly sophisticated set of measures to encourage independent criticism in book selection. Besides naming the titles and authors of the books they requested, members were required “to add the size and number of volumes, the retail price, [and] the character of the work”. Regulations then aimed to stimulate discussion of the competing virtues of the books proposed in this way by instructing the committee to prepare a longer short list than was necessary. The whole society finally voted on the “proper choice of Books” at its annual meeting, presumably after some negotiation in whittling down the short list compiled from their recommendations.<sup>84</sup> Members of the Paisley Library Society were thereby encouraged to become critical consumers of literature as a matter of course, as were subscribers to the Dalkeith Library Society – where each member was required to propose books “with reasons annexed, evidencing that he is acquainted with them”.<sup>85</sup>

Though no record of the discussion of books anywhere has come down to us, evidence relating to the wider intellectual values promoted by such institutions suggests that they not only encouraged critical consumption of the Scottish Enlightenment, but that they also allowed provincial Scots to believe they were participating in some of its major concerns.<sup>86</sup> In particular, it was widely thought that the useful knowledge libraries were designed to offer would contribute to the wider improvement of society. This was precisely the point made by subscribers to the Fenwick Library (Ayrshire) in an extended essay

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<sup>84</sup> *Paisley Library Society Catalogue* (Paisley, 1822). This was all common practice in English libraries, and usually entailed citation of a published review of a work; Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 84–86.

<sup>85</sup> BL 900.f.7.(6), *Rules for the Regulation of the Dalkeith Subscription Library* (Edinburgh, 1798).

<sup>86</sup> Varma reminds us that libraries could be “real venues of intellect and culture, where groups of scholars assembled for discussion and welcome exchange of views”; D. P. Varma, “*The Evergreen Tree of Diabolical Knowledge*” (Washington, DC, 1972), 100. David Allan finds only “hints at the nature of a debate” in the minute book of the Lancaster Amicable Society, “The Scottish Enlightenment and the Readers of Late Georgian Lancaster: ‘Light in the North’”, *Northern History*, 36 (2000), 277.

on the merits of subscription libraries composed to preface their 1825 catalogue:

Nothing can be better calculated than a Library adapted to the habits and various pursuits of the community where it is established. The utility of such institutions has happily been long acknowledged in Scotland; and to the diffusion of knowledge, of which they have been not the least considerable instruments, we are indebted, under God, for great part of that light and liberty which we enjoy.<sup>87</sup>

Associational readers at Renton also expressed “their earnest, [and] unanimous desire” that their Library might “be a powerful means of gradually improving the neighbourhood in knowledge, in piety and in virtue”.<sup>88</sup> In both of these instances, notably, the rhetoric was not that of the clergymen, lawyers or medical professionals who were most often at the forefront of associational library activity in this period, but that of weavers, smiths, bleachers and calico printers who had no traceable educational or cultural links with the metropolitan Enlightenment.

This was a theme reinforced by a host of contributors to the *Statistical Account*, who as clergymen were all products of an enlightened university education. John Smith, an impeccably enlightening influence in rural Argyllshire and author of *Gaelic Antiquities* (1780), declaimed that the newly founded subscription library in Campbeltown “promises much utility, by diffusing general knowledge and a taste for reading”.<sup>89</sup> Alexander Mollison was equally convinced that the library founded in Montrose in 1785 promised “to increase knowledge and to diffuse a taste for learning, and ought as much as possible to be encouraged”.<sup>90</sup> Robert Small, by contrast, bemoaned the poverty of Dundee’s intellectual culture in 1792, particularly highlighting the want of “any tolerable public library”.<sup>91</sup> Within four years, the city’s maritime, mercantile and artisanal communities had plugged this gap by founding two libraries on the subscription model, the Dundee Library (founded 1792) and the Dundee Public Library (1796). In Edinburgh too, even though the city was already very well-equipped with alternative sources for books, the ten individuals who met in 1800 to discuss the

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<sup>87</sup> *Regulations and Catalogue of the Fenwick Library* (Kilmarnock, 1827). As Raven points out, “the prefaces of the proprietary library catalogues...from Leeds to Spalding, from Bristol to Bungay, declared civilising, socialising ambition”; “Libraries”, 248.

<sup>88</sup> *Catalogue of the Renton Library*.

<sup>89</sup> OSA, 8: 65; ODNB.

<sup>90</sup> OSA, 13: 547. *Fasti*.

<sup>91</sup> OSA, 13: 192. ODNB.

foundation of a subscription library, who included a tin smith and an umbrella maker, spoke of the “importance of useful knowledge” in improving society.<sup>92</sup>

Subscription libraries often sought to prove useful to the wider community in more tangible ways. At Montrose, Renton and Dundee, library managers made philanthropic pledges to extend borrowing privileges *gratis* to suitably qualified individuals, whether this be “public teachers of youth and students at the universities” who could not afford an annual library subscription or simply existing members who had fallen on hard times.<sup>93</sup> In January 1798, the Arbroath Subscription Library awarded honorary membership to the promising local poet, Alexander Balfour (at this time the poorly paid clerk of a local merchant manufacturer), “as a reward of merit” and contribution to “the assistance and encouragement of genius”.<sup>94</sup> In a gesture richly redolent of the “notions of politeness and civility” that characterised the “urban renaissance” of the late eighteenth century, the Wigtown Library voted that “the Burgh of Wigtown should become a subscriber, and the eldest residing magistrate might be admitted to the same privileges as any other member during his being in office”.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, it was not uncommon for subscription libraries to enshrine the principles of toleration and moderation that lay at the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment, with the Hamilton Subscription Library typical in welcoming clergymen from the established church, from the United Secession Church and from the Relief Chapel – with the last two serving concurrently on the Committee of Management in 1824.<sup>96</sup> And the Selkirk Library endorsed the cosmopolitanism of the Edinburgh *literati* in quite spectacular fashion, allowing the Napoleonic prisoners of war sent there on parole free use of the library’s books.<sup>97</sup> With the French officers proving

<sup>92</sup> *Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Library* ([Edinburgh?], 1834), 1.

<sup>93</sup> OSA, 13: 547; Renton Minutes.

<sup>94</sup> Angus Local Studies Centre, Ms 451, Arbroath Subscription Library Papers, minute dated 12 January 1798; ODNB. Balfour’s patriotic poems had recently been published by the *Dundee Repository*, the *British Chronicle*, the *Aberdeen Journal* and James Anderson’s *Bee*.

<sup>95</sup> Wigtown Minutes, 42. P. Borsay, “Urban Life and Culture”, in H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2002), 203; P. Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*.

<sup>96</sup> *Hamilton Subscribers*.

<sup>97</sup> Selkirk Register and Day Book; I will give a more detailed account of their reading habits in a paper selected for publication in the conference proceedings of “Civilians and War in Europe, c.1640–1815”, an international conference held at the University of Liverpool in June 2009.

every bit as bookish as their hosts, we can only speculate what reciprocal benefits accrued for the townsfolk as they fraternised daily with the detainees in front of the library's shelves, deciding what books to read next.

Ultimately, a subscription library could therefore be the springboard to wider improvements, as was suggested by a prominent patron of the Duns Subscription Library, Alexander Hay of Drummelzier, who was once a student of the Enlightenment philosopher Andrew Baxter:

It must give me pleasure to think that Dunse is in a way of becoming a seat of literature, arts and sciences; tho' I must own I should have still more was there a probability of its becoming a settlement for industry, trade and manufactures.<sup>98</sup>

Hay hoped that the establishment of a subscription library in Duns would not only improve the intellectual culture of the area, but that this would ultimately have a knock-on effect on local industry.

But there was also a much more personal kind of improvement at stake in the sociability fostered by associational libraries, the notion that moral insight and understanding on an individual basis would flow from polite sociability. Derived from Addison and Steele's ubiquitous *Spectator* magazine, and from the Earl of Shaftesbury's more cerebral philosophical works, politeness represented a revolution in manners, consigning partisan controversies to the past and expounding the refined virtues of intelligent dialogue and structured, sociable interaction.<sup>99</sup> Nicholas Phillipson contends that polite sociability became the "dominant cultural style" of the Scottish Enlightenment:

Throughout the eighteenth century Scottish intellectual life, and that of Edinburgh in particular, was to be meshed into a complex and constantly changing network of clubs and societies devoted to the improvement of manners, economic efficiency, learning and letters. For it was believed that those who took part in such activities would help to secure their country's independence and acquire a sense of civic virtue.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Duns Proceedings, 7 December 1768; Ian Simpson Ross, *Lord Kames and the Scotland of his Day* (1972), 63; ODNB.

<sup>99</sup> "Politeness was refinement that had submitted to disciplines of sociability: the combination of self-confidence and unpretentiousness, the naturalness and ease, the honesty and elegance, of the fully autonomous being"; Lawrence W. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994), 210.

<sup>100</sup> Phillipson, "Definition", 126; N. T. Phillipson, "The Scottish Enlightenment", in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge,

As Hume himself had written of the refinement of the arts in polite society (a famous passage that associational readers would no doubt have read, including, perhaps, some of the ten borrowers of Hume's *Essays* at Selkirk), "Particular clubs and societies are everywhere formed: both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner: and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace".<sup>101</sup> In small and relatively dislocated communities such as Wigtown and Selkirk, a subscription library or informal book club may have been the only feasible option for importing such priorities to the local level.

The cultural allure of polite sociability explains why subscription libraries in Scotland (as elsewhere) were able to attract as members individuals who had absolutely no need for the functional service they provided.<sup>102</sup> The Kelso Library listed as members three individuals whose extensive private libraries contributed to the large-scale statistical analysis conducted in Chapter One, including Sir Alexander Don of Newton, Sir John Buchanan Riddell of Riddell and the Duke of Roxburgh, while it is likely that many more owned books in their own right.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Hugh Crawford was a leading light of the Greenock Subscription Library, even though he presumably had access to the ample family library at Carthorpe, an important substitute for public library provision in the area before 1783 as we have seen.<sup>104</sup> Even the redoubtable George Lawson is known to have had a sizeable library of his own, which he made readily accessible to friends, students and members of his congregation, as well as to the French Prisoners of War.<sup>105</sup> And at Wigtown, as we have seen, there was a significant proportion of members who hardly borrowed any books from the Library, yet who were exceptionally active in the library's affairs – such committee stalwarts as Commissary McConnell who was elected the library's president in 1798, 1799, 1802 and 1821, and Reverend J. G.

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1981), 27. See also Emerson, "Social Composition"; Holcomb, "A Dance in the Mind"; McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement*.

<sup>101</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 271.

<sup>102</sup> Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, 218.

<sup>103</sup> *Catalogue of the Books of the Kelso Library; Sale Catalogue of the Library at Newton-Don* (Kelso, 1826); *Catalogue of the Library of the late Sir J. Buchanan Riddell, Bt.* (Edinburgh, 1820); *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Duke of Roxburgh* (London, 1812).

<sup>104</sup> He was, for example, listed amongst the 65 subscribers who voted for a raise in the annual subscription fee on 15 March 1805; Greenock Minutes.

<sup>105</sup> *Lawson*, 216–21.

Maitland, who served regularly on the committee in the 1790s but who actually only used the collection on five occasions.

Subscription libraries offered members ample opportunity to debate the relative quality of books and, in addressing the ‘worthiness’ of certain types of books, they also engaged with much broader questions relating to the place of knowledge in society. Moreover, it is hardly likely that such close-knit communities of readers would not have discussed important or challenging authors directly, perhaps working through the problems posed by *The Wealth of Nations* or Hume’s *Essays and Treatises* – like Ridpath, who discussed Hume with other associational readers in Kelso, as we shall see in Chapter Eight.<sup>106</sup> Processes of associational organisation, including minute taking, rule making, financial accounting, elections to office and ballots on major decisions involving book selection and subscription-rate increases, were perfectly designed to allow the kind of social interaction that tended directly towards the refinement which Hume alluded to.<sup>107</sup> If there is any doubt that many members were involved more for the sociable opportunities a subscription library could offer than for its books, the constitution of the Wigtown Library decreed from the outset that its anniversary meetings should be conducted at Murray’s tavern, with dinner ordered as a matter of course.<sup>108</sup> After a meeting of the Inshewan Reading Society in 1825, meanwhile,

The country beverage, whisky toddy, was ordered and the members continued together till a late hour. Many appropriate toasts were drunk in course of the evening and the members, inspired by the enlivening spirit of genuine Glenlivet, sang many national airs with real Scotch glee.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Ridpath*, 6, 130.

<sup>107</sup> The minute books of Scotland’s subscription libraries cited throughout this chapter bear testimony to this, an especially full example being the Kirkcudbright Minutes. For a detailed case study of organized sociability at the Perth Library, see Allan, “Provincial Readers”.

<sup>108</sup> The very first meeting of the society was held at Murray’s tavern, and Item 6 of the newly drafted constitution decreed “that the subscribers shall meet annually in the house of Alexander Murray at noon”; Wigtown Minutes, 3. In eighteenth-century parlance, Murray’s “house” denoted his tavern; for another example in this context, see Raven, *London Booksellers*, 61, 72. At the Anniversary Meeting in 1798 it was agreed “that on their future annual meetings, those who attend shall dine together, at an expense not exceeding two shillings and sixpence per head”; the tradition was still being upheld in 1816.

<sup>109</sup> Kaufman, 257.



Scottish associational libraries, it would seem, were therefore well on the way to institutionalising the “distinctive sociability of the after-meeting dinner” developed elsewhere “[as] a forum for discussion and sociableness complementary to the formal meeting”.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, although it is tempting to draw a direct causal link between the distinctive clubbability of the Edinburgh *literati* (so plausibly upheld in Phillipson’s account of intellectual culture in eighteenth-century Scotland) and the polite sociability fostered by provincial subscription libraries, associational library activity may have had little to do with the Scottish Enlightenment itself. There is little reason to doubt that associational reading in England, continental Europe and North America was every bit as enlightening as it appears to have been in Scotland. Kay Flavell argues that subscription libraries were “one of the key methods for dissemination of enlightened thinking, and one of the motors of enlightened action in eighteenth-century provincial England”.<sup>111</sup> The link between associational reading and enlightenment is no less convincing in North America, where the Philadelphia Library Company is perhaps the most celebrated symbol of American Enlightenment – as much for the mutual self-improvement, polite sociability and educational opportunities it offered as for its association with Benjamin Franklin.<sup>112</sup> Dena Goodman insists that French readers joined “through their subscriptions and reading clubs the Republic of Letters, whose center in the distant Parisian salons they imitated in their collective practices of reading”, while Barney Milstein “relates the emergence of the Reading Society to the educational and social impact of the Enlightenment in German-speaking areas”.<sup>113</sup> Far from being exclusive to the societies and associational libraries of eighteenth-century Scotland, we should recall, Hume himself considered polite sociability an inherent feature of refined civilisation – perhaps what we now term ‘Enlightenment’ – everywhere.

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<sup>110</sup> Raven, *London Booksellers*, 57–8.

<sup>111</sup> Flavell, “Liverpool Library”, 32.

<sup>112</sup> Edwin Wolf, *At the Instance of Benjamin Franklin: A Brief History of the Library Company* (Philadelphia, 1995).

<sup>113</sup> Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, 178–9; B. M. Milstein, *Eight Eighteenth Century Reading Societies: A Sociological Contribution to the History of German Literature* (Berne and Frankfurt, 1972), 6.

## VII

Roger Emerson has warned that “to define *the Enlightenment* as a complex of beliefs is to fail to understand that it possessed an immanent teleology of its own shaped by its mood, methods and its general interest in practical problem solving and improvements”.<sup>114</sup> Subscription libraries are important in any attempt to assess how provincial Scots experienced and embraced the Enlightenment due to the simple fact that they made the books in which its ideas were transmitted much more widely available. Associational readers across a broad cross section of provincial society were able to engage in leading debates in moral philosophy and science as well as in the more predictable genres of history and imaginative literature. Moreover, their pursuit of canonicity suggest that proprietors of subscription libraries envisaged themselves as part of a much wider cultural community, eager to join the ‘reading nation’ as it had been configured in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London.

Far more than that, though, subscription libraries represented a primary venue for polite sociability in towns and villages throughout provincial Scotland, offering subscribers, some of whom clearly had no need for the functional services on offer, the chance to engage in the cultural imperatives of the age, the patriotic improvement of Scottish society through association, intellectual interaction, critical consumption and the pursuit of polite learning. If the Scottish Enlightenment was indeed, to quote John Dwyer, “much more than a corpus of knowledge or a series of events, it was a complex network of symbols and mental approaches”,<sup>115</sup> then subscription libraries represented a crucial staging post in its diffusion through Scottish society. However, it is by no means clear that the “mental approaches” inherent in associational library activity were in any way distinctively Scottish. Though the improving associationalism that was so regularly invoked by members of Scottish subscription libraries may have derived from the polite sociability of the Edinburgh *litterati*, it also reflected the broader “urban renaissance” that transformed provincial urban culture throughout the

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<sup>114</sup> R. L. Emerson, “The Enlightenment and Social Structures”, in P. Fritz and D. Williams (eds.), *City and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto, 1973), 99 n., citing E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1951).

<sup>115</sup> Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 3.

British Isles. More importantly, the rapid diffusion of associational libraries throughout Europe and North America in the second half of the eighteenth century was a sign that the radical new habits of mind espoused by Enlightenment *philosophes* were percolating down through society. Provincial Scotland was certainly not excluded from this process, but its experience was not especially distinctive.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### “VICE AND OBSCENITY DREADFULLY PROPAGATED”: CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

In mapping readers' encounters with the Scottish Enlightenment in provincial Scotland, we have seen that it is not enough simply to take account of the collecting habits and purchasing power of the reading public. Then as now, books were regularly passed informally between friends, acquaintances and neighbours and, particularly in more isolated areas, the larger private collections often became magnets for inquisitive or specialist readers across a wide cross section of provincial society. A voluntary movement emerged in the age of Enlightenment that formalised such arrangements, with like-minded individuals in provincial communities clubbing together to fund the acquisition of books collectively which many of them could not afford separately. These associational readers drew on the potent ideologies of critical consumption, politeness and improvement in a movement that became a defining feature of provincial culture throughout the British Isles and beyond – as well as a vehicle for transmitting enlightened ideas to a much wider audience.

The provision of books, however, was not always conducted according to such associational principles. Scots also had a share in the origins and development of commercial circulating libraries – ostensibly run for profit rather than improvement. Though the traditional claim that Allan Ramsay founded the first circulating library in the British Isles in Edinburgh in the 1720s may be the stuff of legend,<sup>1</sup> ever-speculative Scottish booksellers took to this new way of making cash – actually invented in Restoration London – with such enthusiasm that they restricted the spread of associational reading in towns like Inverness and Elgin until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which the commercial lending libraries operated by Isaac Forsyth in

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<sup>1</sup> Most recently advanced in G. Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley, “Introduction: the changing world of libraries – from cloister to hearth”, in *CHLB2*, 1; B. Martin, *Allan Ramsay: A Study of his Life and Works* (Cambridge, MA, 1931), 146.

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Alston.

Elgin, Alexander Davidson in Inverness and many others in towns across Scotland facilitated the diffusion of enlightened ideas is far more contested ground, with the invective of vociferous guardians of British morality at the time apparently contradicted by contemporary adverts and the few surviving catalogues.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the solitary surviving loans register from an up-market Edinburgh venture for 1828 does little to resolve the confusion in the absence of any earlier borrowing records. But before we can enter such strongly contested territory, we must first explore how circulating libraries on the commercial model emerged in Scotland – especially in the second half of the eighteenth century.

## I

Commercial book lending was a natural extension of the services offered by booksellers. As long as they remained such expensive commodities it was always likely that there would be a sizeable demand for books available for loan, the result being that commercial circulating libraries “grew like cuckoos in the nests of booksellers’ shops” across Britain.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as one enterprising Scottish speculator pointed out,

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<sup>3</sup> Very little attention has been paid to circulating libraries in Scotland; see J. and M. Lough, “Aberdeen Circulating Libraries in the Eighteenth Century,” *Aberdeen University Review*, 31 (1945), 17–23; and W. R. McDonald, “Circulating Libraries in the North-East of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century,” *Bibliothek*, 5 (1968), 119–37. Compare Kaufman; St Clair, *Reading Nation*; Varma, *Evergreen Tree*; C. A. Stewart-Murphy, *A History of British Circulating Libraries* (Newtown PA, 1992); T. Kelly, *Early Public Libraries: A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain before 1850* (London, 1966), 143–9; Raven, “Libraries”; C. Skelton-Foord, “Economics, Expertise, Enterprise and the Literary Scene: The Commercial Management Ethos in British Circulating Libraries”, in E. J. Clery, C. Franklin and P. Garside (eds.), *Authorship, Commerce and the Public: Scene of Writing, 1750–1850* (Houndmills, 2002), 136–52; idem., “Surveying the Circulating-Library Scene: Popular Fiction, 1770–1830”, in P. Vodosek and G. Jefcoate (eds.), *Bibliotheken in der Literarischen Darstellung* (Wiesbaden, 1999), 89–114; idem., “To Buy or to Borrow? Circulating Libraries and Novel Reading in Britain, 1778–1828”, *Library Review*, 47 (1998), 348–54; E. Jacobs, “Eighteenth-century British circulating libraries and cultural book history”, *BH*, 6 (2003), 1–22; K. A. Manley, “Booksellers, Peruke-makers and Rabbit-merchants: the Growth of Circulating Libraries in the Eighteenth Century”, in R. Myers, M. Harris and G. Mandelbrote (eds.), *Libraries and the Book Trade* (New Castle, DE, 2000), 29–47; idem., “Lounging Places and Frivolous Literature: Subscription and Circulating Libraries in the West Country to 1825”, in J. Hinks and C. Armstrong (eds.), *Printing Places* (New Castle, DE, 2005), 107–20.

<sup>4</sup> Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 3.

rental shelves contributed to the growth of the more profitable retail part of a bookseller's business. George Miller, a successful printer and bookseller who ran circulating libraries in Dunbar and Haddington, complained that they were "an unprofitable and troublesome business", but acknowledged their value to the fledgling bookselling business, "of essential use in bringing customers to the shop and enabling me to seek out and establish a business for myself".<sup>5</sup>

Though Kaufman could only identify 25 by name before the turn of the nineteenth century, it is now known that at least 70 circulating libraries flourished in Scotland at some point before 1800.<sup>6</sup> They were most densely concentrated in the big cities, naturally enough, with 29 in Edinburgh, 16 in Glasgow and just five in Aberdeen – though these statistics tend to inflate the real picture, with the same institutions often listed under different proprietors. James Sibbald's Library in Edinburgh, for instance, may well have descended directly from Allan Ramsay himself. Ramsay's rental collection seems to have been managed from 1746 by John Yair, who joined forces briefly with Robert Fleming in 1756 before the operation passed to Margaret Yair in 1758. Mrs Yair's stock was bought in 1779 or 1780 by James Sibbald, the library's fifth proprietor.<sup>7</sup>

While they therefore seem to have been eminently suited to the cut and thrust of metropolitan commercial conditions, circulating libraries were far less prolific in smaller Scottish communities where demand was much smaller and less predictable. There were three in both Inverness (one of which was extremely short lived) and Perth (of which two were associated with the Morison family of printers and publishers),<sup>8</sup> while Dumfries, Kilmarnock, Leith and Paisley had two each. Ayr, Banff, Dalkeith, Dunbar, Elgin, Haddington, Irvine, Beith, Peebles and Peterhead all hosted solitary institutions, meaning overall that circulating libraries were particularly well distributed in the south west, in the central belt, in the north east and in East Lothian – in other words, in the most urbanised and literate areas of the country, and in those

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted by W. J. Couper, *The Millers of Haddington, Dunbar and Dunfermline: A Record of Scottish Bookselling* (London, 1914), 59.

<sup>6</sup> Kaufman; Alston.

<sup>7</sup> Kaufman, 239; Martin, *Allan Ramsay*, 146–7.

<sup>8</sup> On the Morisons' contribution to printing and publishing in provincial Scotland, see R. H. Carnie, *Publishing in Perth Before 1807* (Dundee, 1960); Craig, *Scottish Periodical Press*, 66–9.

areas generally considered the heartlands of Enlightenment in Scotland.<sup>9</sup>

With widening literacy and a growth in real incomes in Scottish towns, circulating libraries became much more common in the first decades of the nineteenth century. At least a further 200 commercial circulating libraries flourished in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, including 53 in Edinburgh, 37 in Glasgow, twelve in Aberdeen and six in Dundee. In the south west, Dumfries naturally led the way with seven, though Ayr, Kilmarnock, Kirkcudbright and Largs (each with two), as well as Annan, Castle Douglas, Lockerbie, Newton Stewart and Stranraer also had circulating libraries. In the Borders too, circulating libraries seem to have been particularly successful, with Hawick (three), Kelso (two), Duns, Galashiels and Jedburgh each having such establishments. In the North East, meanwhile, no less than five circulating libraries were founded in Inverness and Peterhead, two in Stonehaven, and one each in smaller communities such as Huntly and Turriff.

Scotland would appear to have been considerably less susceptible to the circulating model of library provision than England, however, with important towns like Inverness, Ayr, Kilmarnock and Perth sustaining far fewer commercial libraries than English towns of comparable size and status. Inverness, with a population of around 8000 at the turn of the century, hosted five circulating libraries before 1830, but this lagged far behind English towns with a similar population such as Southampton (which had 21), Salisbury (19), Maidstone (14) and Gloucester (13). With its own rapidly-expanding population of 6000 at the time of the *Statistical Account*, circulating library provision in Kilmarnock (where there had been just two before 1830) compared very poorly to towns such as Taunton (10), Warwick, Doncaster (both seven) and Bradford (six). And the contrast was even more dramatic between respectably polite county towns of much smaller size, with Weymouth (13), Lewes (12) and Bedford (10) all far-outstripping the two circulating libraries that flourished in Kelso and Ayr in our period.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> T. Devine, "Urbanisation", in T. M. Devine, and R. Mitchison (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland Volume 1 1760-1830* (Edinburgh, 1988), 27-52; Houston, *Scottish Literacy*; on the spread of circulating libraries to most sizeable towns in Britain, see Feather, "Book Trade and Libraries", 306.

<sup>10</sup> Population sizes derived from OSA; *Census Reports 1801: Abstract of the Answers and Returns Enumeration* (1801; London, 1968); C. W. Chalkin, *The Provincial Towns*

Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that we will ever know precisely how many such enterprises there were. Firm evidence does survive for short-lived ventures such as Donald McDonald's Circulating Library founded in Inverness in 1797 and William Farquhar's failed attempt in Peterhead around 1794 ("he did not find employment and therefore left the place"),<sup>11</sup> but as Kaufman admits, "how many were the timid starts and discontinuances of rental shelves by Scottish booksellers we cannot know".<sup>12</sup> It may well be the case that many more entrepreneurs maintained rental facilities, even for long periods, without a scrap of evidence coming down to us. It is hardly conceivable that booksellers in a town with such a strongly literate community as St Andrews would not have loaned books before George Scott started doing so in around 1824 – especially as we know of no associational library in the town before the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, we know of just one circulating library (run by Miller & Sons from 1805) in Dunfermline before the philanthropist and public library reformer Andrew Carnegie was born there in 1835, but at least ten more booksellers had been

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of *Georgian England: A Study of the Building Process 1740–1820* (London, 1974); E. A. Wrigley, *People, Cities and Wealth: The Transformation of Traditional Society* (Oxford, 1987); P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol. II 1540–1840* (Cambridge, 2000). Library numbers from Alston.

<sup>11</sup> *SBTI*. Farquhar's experience recalls that of William Rind, who has been credited with founding North America's first (but hopelessly "premature") circulating library in Annapolis in 1762; C. Winton, "The Southern Book Trade in the Eighteenth Century", in *A History of the Book in America Volume I: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory & David D. Hall (Cambridge, 2000; paperback edn., Chapel Hill, 2007), 238; David Kaser, *A Book for Sixpence: The Circulating Library in America* (Pittsburgh, 1980), 3, 9, 19–23.

<sup>12</sup> Kaufman, 276. This is not to mention the many inns and coffee houses who may have offered books on site to customers, including the coffee shop Henry Mackenzie had in mind in writing about the reception of the first number of the *Mirror* magazine in 1779 "where it is actually taken in for the use of the customers; a set of old gentlemen, at one table, throwing it aside to talk over a bargain; and a company of young ones, at another, breaking off in the middle to decide a match at billiards"; *The Works of Henry Mackenzie* (1808; London, 1996), 4: 6–7.

<sup>13</sup> According to the *SBTI*, booksellers in St Andrews included M. Grieg (fl. 1747), Alexander McCulloch (fl. 1736), T. Peat (fl. 1812–14) and Patrick Bower (1746–1807). Scott's Circulating Library, No. 36 South Street, St Andrews is not recorded by Alston, but we know of its existence thanks to a surviving bookplate in a copy of Thomas Skinner Surr's *Barnwell. A Novel* (London, 1807), held at SAUL s.PR5499.S36B2. Alston speculates that the St Andrews Library and Reading Room (1845) "absorbed earlier subscription libraries". Lending at the University Library was restricted to staff and to students who had written permission; Simpson, "You have not such a one in England"; M. Simpson, "St Andrews University Library in the Eighteenth Century: Scottish education and print-culture" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1999); P. Freshwater, "Books and Universities", in *CHLB2*, 358.



active in the ancient burgh before the turn of the century who might have loaned books without leaving any trace of the fact.<sup>14</sup> Some book-sellers advertised their rental and retail stock in the same circulars, updating regular clients on changes to both at the same time,<sup>15</sup> while others loaned stock to trusted customers on a much less formal basis.<sup>16</sup> Adam Smith arranged for his bookseller to buy back books immediately after he had read them,<sup>17</sup> while the Glasgow firm of James Brash and William Reid seem to have been particularly generous. Marooned on the tiny island of Little Cumbrae off the Ayrshire coast, Mary Anne Wodrow Archbald survived on bulk loans of books sent informally by Brash & Reid. Before emigrating to North America in 1807, she knitted them pairs of “furr gloves” in return for their kindness and “civility”.<sup>18</sup> Brash also helped the aspiring poet John Struthers (then working as a shoemaker in East Kilbride) find his feet in the literary world, letting him borrow books at closing time on a Saturday evening.

which he could keep and read till Monday forenoon... By this means he read, besides many books that he could never otherwise have seen, all the Reviews, nearly as regularly as if he had been a subscriber to them.<sup>19</sup>

## II

In reality, then, there may have been many more bookshops in Georgian Scotland where there was no formal division between books that were offered for loan or for sale. In purely physical terms, however, it is clear enough that commercial circulating libraries must have enabled literate men and women in towns across Scotland to become consumers of literature during our period, even though we will never be certain just how significant a factor they were in providing reading matter. More

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<sup>14</sup> *SBTI*. The Carnegie link gives Dunfermline a strong tradition in library provision; see A. S. Robertson, *History of Dunfermline Tradesmen's and Mechanic's Library: The Origin of the Carnegie Free Libraries* (Dunfermline, 1914).

<sup>15</sup> See for instance NAS GD248/451/17, Estate Correspondence 1808–1814 (includes Isaac Forsyth to James Grant of Heathfield).

<sup>16</sup> Giles Mandelbrote, “Personal Owners of Books”, in *CHLB2*, 181.

<sup>17</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 236.

<sup>18</sup> Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton MA: MS 6 Box 4 Folder 7, Journal of Mary Anne Wodrow Archbald, volume 7 (1797–1806), 100. I am extremely grateful to Dr Alison Scott (Harvard University Library) for the use of her complete transcriptions of Archbald's voluminous letters, commonplace books and journals. For Brash & Reid, see *SBTI*.

<sup>19</sup> *Poetical Works of John Struthers, with an Autobiography* (London, 1850), I, lxxxviii; *ODNB*.

urgently, we also need to identify what type of literature they promoted and who their most reliable customers were. As Brewer admits, “the received wisdom about circulating libraries was that they were repositories of fictional pap, served up to women who had little to do but surfeit themselves with romantic nonsense”, and the vast weight of contemporary commentary rules out a positive role for circulating libraries in sustaining provincial Enlightenment.<sup>20</sup> The very source that has sustained Ramsay’s reputation over the centuries as the founding father of commercial book lending was actually a splenetic attack on him by the Presbyterian historian Robert Wodrow, whose nightmarish vision of circulating library provision (unpublished until the mid nineteenth century) still informs much modern conjecture on their role:

Besides this, profaneness is come to a great hight, all the villainous, profane and obscene bookes and playes printed at London by Curle and others, are gote doune by Allan Ramsey, and lent out, for an easy price, to young boyes, servant weemen of the better sort, and gentlemen, and vice and obscenity dreadfully propagated. Ramsay has a book in his shope wherein all the names of those that borrou his playes and books, for two pence a night, or some such rate, are sett down; and by these, wickednes of all kinds are dreadfully propagate among the youth of all sort.<sup>21</sup>

Those who took it upon themselves to act as moral guardians of the British nation as the century progressed may have written with more polite restraint than Wodrow, but their message was effectively the same – that by their incessant promotion of novels and romances, circulating libraries were propagating “vice and obscenity”. James Beattie remembered with barely-concealed disdain his own visit to a circulating library in Dundee, and his was presumably the kind of experience that prompted public-spirited Dundonians to found two subscription libraries expressly for the improvement of the town in the 1790s. Associational readers in Greenock apparently shared their concerns in a blaze of self-justificatory glory, setting up a subscription library explicitly to “avert the fatal effects which are sometimes occasioned by circulating libraries”.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures*, 179.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Wodrow, *Analecta or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences* (Edinburgh, 1842); quoted by Martin, *Allan Ramsay*, 33–4; see also A. Broadie, *Scottish Enlightenment: the Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh, 2001), 152. On Wodrow’s Presbyterian credentials, see ODNB.

<sup>22</sup> OSA, 7: 717. Members of the Lewes Literary Society were equally “disgusted at the usual trash of the circulating libraries” in 1786; quoted by St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 249.

The authors of the *Lounger*, meanwhile, explicitly condemned “that common herd of Novels (the wretched offspring of circulating libraries) which are despised for their insignificance or proscribed for their immorality”;<sup>23</sup> while the English radical William Hone blamed the deleterious effect of a local circulating library for his own youthful slumber – “an extensive circulating library supplied me with romances and novels which I read rapidly and incessantly... My mind had thus become enfeebled”.<sup>24</sup> And though an industry insider writing in the *Monthly Magazine* tolerated them “as useful establishments...as far as they exhibit the passions and foibles of mankind, amend the heart, and extend the influence of sentiment and sensibility”, the models they provided for such moral instruction were universally bad ones, for “they supply novels and high-seasoned productions for sickly or perverted appetites”.<sup>25</sup> Even in the 1840s, parliamentarians discussing the projected Public Libraries Bill acknowledged that the by-then endemic commercial circulating libraries “do not at all supply the place of those public libraries we wish for”, promoting “very much novels and other ephemera”, “the common popular cheap novel”.<sup>26</sup> The contrast with MPs’ admiration for associational libraries in Ayrshire (cited above) could not have been sharper.

There was, of course, an underlying moral agenda to the perception that circulating libraries were associated above all with giddy young women and their ‘inappropriate’ responses to novels and romances. According to the pre-eminent authority on women’s reading in eighteenth-century Britain, circulating libraries “constituted a vigorously contested space” where sexual and social boundaries were frequently transgressed, and where women’s passions were supposedly allowed to rage unchecked. Hence in the literature of the time,

they were imagined as an “evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge”, “filthy streams of spiritual and moral pollution”, “the gin-shop of [female] minds”, a “great evil”, simultaneously conveying “food and poison” to the young reader.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Lounger*, No. 20 (1794).

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 666; ODNB.

<sup>25</sup> *Monthly Magazine* (June 1821), quoted by St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 667.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Aitken, *Public Library Movement*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Pearson, *Women’s Reading*, 168; 163–4. See also Kaufman, 22–5, 58–62; Skelton-Foord, “Surveying”, 89–114; idem., “To Buy or to Borrow?”, 348–54; Innes, “Libraries in Context”, 298.

Such discourse had wide-reaching implications for British society, according to contemporary ideas about the role of women. Scottish Enlightenment authors – especially Henry Mackenzie and his fellow contributors to the *Mirror* and *Lounger* magazines – argued that women had a fundamental duty to safeguard the moral rectitude of polite families across Britain. The softer feminine passions could be deployed in the domestic sphere to moderate husbands’ and sons’ behaviour, “a vaccination against or antidote to the corruption of modern fashionable life”.<sup>28</sup> Circulating libraries not only encouraged women to lay claim to a public space (thus transgressing the firm belief that women had to be “domestic angels” to rule the passions of men), they also allowed women to indulge their passions in pursuit of fashionable vanity and luxurious sentimentality by exposing them indiscriminately to the wrong kind of literature – irrevocably corrupting their own innate moral purity.

Nevertheless, moralistic parodies of the dangers posed by commercial libraries have had a marked effect on modern scholarship, with those working on the history of libraries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries usually agreeing with Dedendra Varma that circulating libraries served a “demand for light literature”.<sup>29</sup> Obviously, modern scholars are now a great deal more sympathetic to the novel as a genre, but they continue to work within the confines of contemporary – usually hostile – representations of commercial library provision, failing adequately to grasp the polemic inherent in Wodrow’s *Analecta* or Mackenzie’s *Lounger*. Varma studies circulating libraries almost exclusively as purveyors of fiction (explicitly setting out to investigate “what sort of novels were read”), seemingly reluctant to acknowledge the surviving catalogues and adverts that purported to offer customers a much wider range of reading matter.<sup>30</sup> St Clair agrees, arguing that

Circulating libraries were predominantly feminine in the nature of the texts they provided... The business of most English circulating libraries was not to provide a comprehensive book-lending facility for the local community, but to rent out the latest novels and romances when they first appeared, and to replace them frequently.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 129.

<sup>29</sup> Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 31–2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–2; 65; 66.

<sup>31</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 244.

Such views, if right, would cast considerable doubt on the ability of circulating libraries to allow consumers to encounter important works of non-fiction, including the major books of the Scottish Enlightenment whose reception is investigated here.

### III

Jacqueline Pearson suggests, however, that “despite the usefulness to hostile propagandists of an image of libraries dominated by women reading pulp fiction, this was not historically true”.<sup>32</sup> William Borthwick Johnstone’s famous portrait of Burns and Scott in Sibbald’s Bookshop represents a dramatic counterpoint to Wodrow’s thunderous assault on Sibbald’s illustrious predecessor. Johnstone placed some of the leading figures in Scottish Enlightenment culture in the most prestigious circulating library of the age, including Ferguson, Lord Monboddo, Blair and Mackenzie. He thereby associated Sibbald’s Library with the informal transferral of ideas, the inquisitive sampling of new kinds of literature (in his suggestive portrayal of Ferguson and a youthful Walter Scott both browsing books on site) and even, perhaps, the cultivation of sociability and politeness – all key components of associational reading, as we have seen in Chapter Two.<sup>33</sup> This notion that circulating libraries played a wider role in Scotland’s intellectual culture was apparently ratified by a passing contemporary description of Alexander Brown’s Circulating Library in Aberdeen as a place “to which all the literati resort”.<sup>34</sup> These two momentary snapshots of commercial borrowing in turn illustrate perfectly Brewer’s hunch that they “offered comfortable, spacious surroundings in which the customers could gossip, flirt, browse, examine newspapers and reviews”.<sup>35</sup>

More broadly, and though their subscribers are extremely hard to identify in the historical record, surviving material suggests that commercial circulating libraries were patronised by the very same social groupings who sustained associational library culture. St Clair believes

<sup>32</sup> Pearson, *Women’s Reading*, 169.

<sup>33</sup> The portrait is reproduced by Kaufman, Plate 1, 236–7; it also adorns the front cover of Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted by Crawford, “Origins”, 85.

<sup>35</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures*, 176; see also Colclough, *Consuming Texts*, 94. Hall’s circulating library in Margate “had a spacious reading room where he provided his subscribers with tables and chairs”, Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 53.

that in England they had around 70 patrons each and that “membership never widened beyond the aristocratic, professional and business classes”, although on the available evidence such conclusions remain highly speculative.<sup>36</sup> The most recent book on English libraries draws attention to the likely untypicality of circulating library clientele in the fashionable resorts of Brighton, Bath and Cheltenham which boast the sole surviving records – and thus to the wrong-headedness of such unsubstantiated generalisations.<sup>37</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter in England, no such estimate is remotely sustainable for Scotland. A professional and mercantile customer base is certainly implied by the urban location of most circulating libraries, as well as their particular prominence in Scottish spa towns and tourist resorts – part of the paraphernalia that accompanied the leisured classes at play in such watering holes as Elgin, Peebles, Moffat or the Bridge of Earn. But allusions to a much broader customer base are embedded in contemporary catalogues, with a dazzling range of professional, vocational and practical self-help books suggesting that patrons commonly ranged from medical practitioners, lawyers and clergymen to merchants, seamen, accountants and weavers. Of course, their wives, mothers and sisters would have found *The Complete House-wife, or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion* and *The Experienced English House Wife, for the use and ease of Ladies, House-keepers, Cooks Etc.* especially useful, but these inherently feminine works are generally overwhelmed in the catalogues by such masculine titles as *The Fencer's Guide*, *The Weaver's Index*, *The Seaman's Daily Assistant*, *The Office of a Notary*, *The Art of Short-hand Writing*, *The Rudiments of Architecture*, *The Practising Attorney, or Lawyers Office*, Shaw's *Practical Justice of Peace*, and *The Parent's and Guardian's Directory, and the Youth's Guide, in the choice of a trade*.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, many booksellers explicitly combined their rental

<sup>36</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 237, 241; Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Allan regrets “that the surviving membership records come exclusively from libraries that belonged to those most rarefied of contemporary social environments, the endlessly talked-about spas and the resort towns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries”; *Nation of Readers*, 143–47.

<sup>38</sup> Based on a survey of six surviving provincial catalogues: *A Catalogue of Books Consisting of some thousand volumes ... Which are Lent ... By A. Davidson ...* ([Inverness?], 1782), copy at Inverness Public Library (hereafter *Davidson*); *Catalogue of the Elgin Circulating Library ...* ([Elgin?], 1789), copy at NLS RB.s.1488; *Sale and Circulating Catalogue of Books ... to be had of William White at his Shops in Irvine and Beith (n.p., 1780)*, copy at Ardrossan Public Library (hereafter *White*); *A Catalogue of the Paisley Circulating Library ...* (Paisley, 1789), copy at Paisley Public Library;

shelves with other useful and professional services, aimed at a wide cross-section of the local community. A book catalogue issued by Alexander Davidson of Inverness in 1782, for example, offered “All sorts of Account Books for Merchants, Country Gentlemen, or Tradesmen, in various Bindings”.<sup>39</sup>

More specifically, we have the concrete example of Robert Chambers’s Circulating Library, which served the literary tastes of wealthy New Town gentlemen and professionals in the late 1820s. A surviving ledger lists as borrowers a Member of Parliament, George Grant, two Professors of the University of Edinburgh, five Church of Scotland ministers, four medical men, three bankers, three writers and two advocates.<sup>40</sup> As the East Lothian bookseller George Miller testified, military officers on temporary secondment in a given locality could also be an important demographic for commercial libraries – and accordingly, thirteen military men borrowed books from Chambers in 1828, including officers lodging in Queen Street and Hanover Street as well as those stationed at Piershill Barracks.<sup>41</sup> In sharp contrast to the stereotypical circulating library, supposedly responsible for poisoning the imagination and morals of impressionable young ladies, less than a third of all Chambers’s subscribers were women – a proportion broadly comparable with female participation in many Scottish associational libraries, and also consistent with recent research on circulating libraries in the English Midlands and in Philadelphia.<sup>42</sup>

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*A Catalogue of the New Circulating Library ...* (Dundee, 1782), copy at Dundee Central Library; *A Catalogue of Instructive and Entertaining Books, Which are lent out to read... by William Phorson,... at his Circulating Library, Bridge-Street, Berwick...* (Berwick, 1790), copy at BL s.c.1396. Although Berwick was (and remains) the most northerly town in England, Phorson’s library must in all probability have attracted a large number of Scottish customers and is thus included here; the wide hinterland served by circulating libraries is discussed below.

<sup>39</sup> Davidson; Varma points out that “bookbinders, engravers, picture-framers, grocers and tobacconists advertised themselves as libraries”, many offered medical remedies and at least one was also an undertaker, the Bristol circulating librarian, Isaac James; *Evergreen Tree*, 61; see also P. Isaac, “Charles Elliot and Spilsbury’s Antiscorbutic Drops”, in his and B. McKay (eds.), *The Reach of Print: Making, Selling and Using Books* (Winchester, 1998), 154–74.

<sup>40</sup> NLS Ms Dep.341/413, Library Ledger, Chambers Circulating Library, 1828.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; Couper, *Millers*, 63; Raven, “Libraries”, 256; military men were also amongst the most noteworthy customers of George Williams’s Library in Cheltenham, Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 145–6.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.; Fergus, *Provincial Readers*, 15, 71; Ross R. Beales and James N. Green, “Libraries and Their Users”, in *A History of the Book in America Volume 1: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory & David D. Hall (Cambridge, 2000;

Though quite clearly an urban phenomenon, for obvious reasons, circulating libraries were also capable of supplying books to substantial rural hinterlands. Miller rebranded his own rental operation “The Dunbar and County Circulating Library” in 1809, though it had failed within a decade, while many more outlined arrangements for a separate category of country borrowers. Davidson’s usual rule for customers living in Inverness was that “one book must be returned, and paid for, before another can be demanded”, but he conceded that “Readers in the country who are subscribers, will be allowed two books, or two volumes of a book at a time”.<sup>43</sup> William White was even more sympathetic to “readers in the country, who have occasion to get books but once a week, [and] shall be indulged with four at once”.<sup>44</sup> Isaac Forsyth, meanwhile, actively solicited custom across a broad swathe of north-eastern Scotland, alluding to Elgin’s propitious location on the main road from Aberdeen to Inverness:

No place in the North of Scotland possesses such a facility and regularity of carriage as Elgin does, to the east and west. Carriers in both directions go and return every week. Ladies and Gentlemen wishing to become subscribers in Inverness, Fort George, Nairn, Forbes, Fochabers, Keith, Huntly and Cullen, or their respective neighbourhoods will be punctually supplied with Books *at the very lowest rate of carriage possible*, and their parcels received and delivered regularly by an agent at each of these places, without having anything whatever to do with the carriers.<sup>45</sup>

Surviving correspondence sent to customers by Forsyth illustrates the kind of country readers he had in mind. Circulars were sent to the factor of Strathspey, James Grant Esq. of Heathfield,<sup>46</sup> to the minister of Knockando, John Grant,<sup>47</sup> and to the laird of Grant, Sir James Grant, and his wife Lady Jane (all kinsmen of Forsyth on his mother’s side).<sup>48</sup> Chambers sent books to patrons within at least a fifty-mile radius of

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paperback edn., Chapel Hill, 2007), 403. On the question of female use of commercial libraries, see Jacobs, “Circulating Libraries”; Pearson, *Women’s Reading*, 162–70; and Vickery, *Gentleman’s Daughter*, 9, 288.

<sup>43</sup> Davidson, Condition IV.

<sup>44</sup> White, Condition III.

<sup>45</sup> NAS GD248/451/17; printed circular addressed to James Grant Esq., of Heathfield.

<sup>46</sup> James Grant of Heathfield (1733–1821), identified in I. H. Adams (ed.), *Papers on Peter May Land Surveyor 1749–1793* (Edinburgh, 1979), 275.

<sup>47</sup> *Fasti*.

<sup>48</sup> NAS GD248/656/3; GD248/708/1; GD248/520/8. Sir James Grant of Grant (8th bt, 1738–1811), agricultural improver and politician, ODNB.



Edinburgh, including Patrick Hay Esq. of Mugdrum Island, off Newburgh in Fife, General Andrew Drummond of Culdees Castle, Perthshire,<sup>49</sup> Mrs Baillie at Mellerstain House, Kelso, and Miss Blair at Avontown near Linlithgow.<sup>50</sup> Finally, surviving catalogues of circulating libraries run in Aberdeen by Alexander Brown and John Burnett both bear the bookplate of “Sir Archibald Grant of Monymoske Bart.,” a well-known improver and founder of the planned village of Monymusk, twenty miles west of Aberdeen.<sup>51</sup> Such evidence would therefore suggest that besides church ministers, estate factors and their families, commercial library proprietors usually had the traditional landholding elites in mind when they made special arrangements for country borrowers. At the same time, however, anecdotal evidence suggests that circulating libraries could cater for quite diverse reading publics. Susan Sibbald admitted borrowing books from a circulating library in Melrose with her elder sister Jane, recalling with glee the literary adventures of a fellow borrower, a local shepherd named William Carruthers:

I always found Willie reading as he subscribed to the circulating Library at Melrose, and he knew more of Ancient and Modern History I am ashamed to own, than I did... Seeing that Willy was trying to put a book into his pocket, I said, “That is not *Josephus* you are reading now Willy.” “Na, when I had read it, I sent the callent back to the Leebrary wi’t, and they sent me this ane, ‘tis but a navel or nonsense buke as I ca’ them. My reading is like the Warld, sometimes grave and sometimes gay, its weel whan we can ha’ them deveeded, an’ no o’er muckle o’ane or the other.”<sup>52</sup>

We do not know on what terms Willie borrowed books from the Melrose Circulating Library, but there is some evidence (not least in the liberal conduct of Messrs Brash and Reid mentioned earlier) to suggest that booksellers might have offered special rates to poor readers, being mindful of the kind of ideologies that moved associational readers discussed in the previous chapter – not least their commitment to useful literature, educational emancipation and civic improvement. George Moir, a hosier in the Gallowgate, Aberdeen, worked hard to

<sup>49</sup> General Drummond apparently had his own large library at Culdees Castle, near Crieff; Alston.

<sup>50</sup> Chambers Library Ledger.

<sup>51</sup> McDonald, “Circulating Libraries”, 137. Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk (2nd bt, 1696–1778), ODNB.

<sup>52</sup> *The Memoirs of Susan Sibbald (1783–1812)*, edited by Francis Paget Hett (London, 1926), 166–7, 200.

overcome the usual accusations levied against commercial libraries in advertising the Select Circulating Library he established in 1800. Emphasising the value of useful knowledge at the library's launch, Moir made the familiar complaint that "from the high price of books, the scantiness of their own funds, or want of access to a well-chosen collection, they [the citizens of Aberdeen] are prevented from devoting their leisure time to the improvement of their minds". His stated "desire of obviating these difficulties" thus placed the library in the same territory as subscription libraries and book clubs in fulfilling an improving role in society explicitly by facilitating the wider consumption of literature and ideas.<sup>53</sup>

Moir's intentions were evident especially in the kinds of restrictions he imposed upon the "Select" stock offered for loan. He placed a special emphasis on "bringing the means (especially) of religious improvement within the reach of all who may be disposed to embrace the opportunity", and more broadly stocked books "on subjects of general utility, or innocent amusement; as History, Voyages, Travels, &c." However, like most associational libraries, he banned works "on Politics, or Controversy civil or religious, if written in a bad spirit", and plays, romances and novels outright, justifying these last exclusions by referring his younger clients to James Hay Beattie:

Having read, by advice, one of the most admired productions of this kind, he said "The time spent in reading it was lost and there was more danger from the indelicacy of particular passages, than hope of its doing good by the satire – the moral sentiments – or the distributive justice, dispensed in winding up the catastrophe."

Though we may be naturally sceptical about Moir's true intentions here, he headed off any undue cynicism by pledging not only "to lend a book occasionally *gratis* to young people, or others who cannot afford to subscribe" (working men like Willie Carruthers and John Struthers, perhaps), but also "to lay out the whole subscription-money, at least for some years, in increasing the library".<sup>54</sup>

For Isaac Forsyth, the success of his Elgin Circulating Library was both a gauge of how far intellectual pursuits had advanced in the town since its foundation (1789) and a means of securing further

<sup>53</sup> *Catalogue of the Select Circulating Library ...* (Aberdeen, 1800), ii.

<sup>54</sup> *Catalogue of the Select Circulating Library*, ii, vi; cf. J. Beattie, *Essays and Fragments in Prose and Verse*. By James Hay Beattie. To which is prefixed an account of the author's life and character (Edinburgh, 1794), 72–3.

improvement. In a circular celebrating the Library's twentieth anniversary, Forsyth informed regular subscribers of his "anxious desire to enlarge and improve his Collection, that it might keep pace with the increasing spirit of investigation which the improved state of society demands", and massaged the polite pretensions of local residents in terms familiar to anyone who has glanced through subscription library records of the period, let alone the *Spectator* itself:

At a period like the present, when every Lady and every Gentleman is desirous to maintain a respectable appearance in society, from the extent and accuracy of their information; no institution is more deserving of, or more likely to receive their support and encouragement, than a Library conducted on such liberal principles.<sup>55</sup>

Forsyth even directed subscribers towards publications he considered particularly important in promoting the patriotic task of agricultural improvement in the north east. In one lengthy letter to the above-mentioned factor of Strathspey, he was not content simply to recommend the good work done by the editors of the *Farmer's Magazine*. He also urged the recipient himself to contribute to this local branch of scientific improvement – significant advice indeed to a man who managed one of the largest estates in the north east of Scotland:

I enclose a few bills respecting the Farmers Magazine, which is a work of real merit, & now in so general esteem that upwards of 2000 copies are now printed. In the next issue there will be an account of the embankment of the sea near Forres, to which 50 acres of very valuable corse land has been saved, by Mr John Hoyes there. And also an account of the division of the aughtenpart lands near Elgin. In the following issue a very particular account of Mr William Young's operations at Inchbroom on the Loch of Cotts is to appear. If there is anything doing in Strathspey towards the *improvement* of the country in agriculture, I should be much obliged by your getting an account of it drawn up by the factor or any of the Gentlemen that may be concerned in the Improvement. The Editor is particularly anxious for articles of this kind. I beg you would put these bills into the hands of your principal Farmers and recommend the magazine to their notice in doing so you do them a favour, for this Publication is now looked to by the first Farmers in Scotland as a source of the best information.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> NAS GD248/451/17, letter to James Grant of Heathfield, 10 October 1809; I. Forsyth Macandrew, *Memoir of Isaac Forsyth Bookseller in Elgin 1765–1859* (London, 1889).

<sup>56</sup> NAS GD248/455/6, Forsyth to James Grant.

Moreover, Forsyth was personally involved in his own right in projects that tended directly towards the physical improvement of the Morayshire infrastructure. He took a leading role, for instance, in organising the construction by subscription of a road between Elgin and Knockando, helped by the local minister, John Grant, who was a regular customer of the Elgin Circulating Library and a keen amateur local historian and antiquary.<sup>57</sup> Finally, Forsyth further emphasised both his public-spirited intentions and his customers' aspirations to polite respectability when he solicited subscriptions for a proposed "Literary and Commercial News-Room in Elgin":

Having frequently occasion to hear the want of an Establishment of this nature in ELGIN, complained of; begs leave to submit to his Fellow Citizens, and the Gentlemen of the Neighbourhood, the PROSPECTUS of a PLAN, which, if supported by them, in the Manner he hopes, would enable him to carry it into immediate Effect. At no Period of greater public Anxiety could it have been attempted, than the present – when Political Events are not only unexampled in their Magnitude, but rapid beyond all former precedent in their Revolutions, and inexpressibly interesting in their Consequences.

By the introduction of the most respectable and popular Monthly and Quarterly Publications, Books of Reference, and a Collection of good Maps, he wishes to combine the Advantages of a Literary, with those of a Political and Commercial Establishment. – Thus affording the Man of much, and the Man of little Leisure, a most invaluable Source of Information and Amusement, at all Times accessible to him – and that at an Expence considerably less than he can enjoy even one solitary Newspaper in his own House.<sup>58</sup>

Such puffs may say as much about Forsyth's ability as a self-publicist as they do about his earnest desire to serve the interests of an emergent Elgin intelligentsia, but they do at least suggest that literary affairs were held in increasingly high regard in this relatively remote corner of northern Scotland. Forsyth hoped to capitalise financially on the cultural aspirations of his customers, and presented associational reading of the kind facilitated by his proposed reading room as the most appropriate venue for their literary patriotism.

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<sup>57</sup> NAS GD248/696/3/3. For a discussion of Grant's reading experiences, see Chapter Seven below.

<sup>58</sup> NAS GD248/616/4/26, Printed Circular from Isaac Forsyth, n.d. Commercial reading rooms specializing in the provision of periodicals and newspapers were a noteworthy feature of circulating library provision in North America from 1800; see Kaser, *Book for Sixpence*, 73–83.

## IV

Implicit in all this was the conviction that, to be commercially viable, circulating libraries needed to offer far more than the kind of ephemeral pulp fiction that supposedly attracted the stereotypical consumer base of giddy and impressionable young ladies. This is clearly reflected by a survey of their advertisements, which given the financial risks involved must have placed special emphasis on types of literature that would be most appealing to general readers.<sup>59</sup> Novels were included in such adverts as a matter of course, but they were usually accompanied by claims that the library in question extended to “the various Branches of Science and Literature”.<sup>60</sup>

Moir, as we have already suggested, earnestly placed his own emphasis on “six hundred volumes of Divinity and History, to which will be added new Publications of merit”, though most booksellers advertised a broader set list of genres that tended to include History, Voyages, Novels, Poetry and Plays (usually in that order).<sup>61</sup> Farquhar advertised “a neat assortment of Books, consisting of History, Voyages, Travels, Lives, Novels, Plays, Poetry and Miscellaneous Literature”, while Caldwell (perhaps wisely, in light of Farquhar’s failure in Peterhead) added “Biography, Religion & Church History” to the standard list.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> On the value of circulating library adverts, see Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 68–73, although he overlooks history, claiming instead that plays, novels, sermons and religious works and pamphlets were the most regularly advertised genres. More recently, Norbert Schürer warns against taking London advertisements at face value, arguing that the categories reflected “a convention established among circulating-library proprietors”; “Four Catalogues of the Lowndes Circulating Library, 1755–66”, *PBSA*, 101 (2007), 342.

<sup>60</sup> McDonald, “Circulating Libraries”, 127, 131; the view that circulating libraries should consist of at least 70% fictional literature was propagated by the contemporary Bromley bookseller, Thomas Wilson, in *The Uses of Circulating Libraries Considered* (London, 1797), reprinted in full by Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 195–203. On the involvement of English circulating library proprietors in the publishing of popular Gothic romances, see E. Jacobs, “Anonymous Signatures: Circulating Libraries, Conventionality, and the Production of Gothic Romances”, *English Literary History*, 62 (1995), 603–29.

<sup>61</sup> McDonald, “Circulating Libraries”, 130. The priority of history in such adverts may reflect book sizes, with the tendency to list books in order of size from folios downwards. Thus history may be listed first because histories tended to be folios, whereas novels were merely duodecimos.

<sup>62</sup> George Wood’s advertisement for a circulating library at Charleston, South Carolina, founded in 1763 bears remarkably close comparison, offering prospective customers “a Collection of curious BOOKS consisting of histories, voyages, travels, lives, memoirs, novels, plays etc”; Kaser, *Book for Sixpence*, 25.

William White, whose collection only numbered a little over one thousand titles, was least discriminatory of all, hoping to capture as many potential markets as possible in advertising a collection of

The most select Authors on the following subjects:

Antiquities	Gardening	Poetry
Arts	History	Philosophy
Anatomy	Husbandry	Physic
Botany	Lives	Sciences
Commerce	Memoirs	Surgery
Coins	Minerals	Trade
Divinity	Novels	Travels
Geography	Plays	Voyages <sup>63</sup>

Notices of Alexander Angus's intention to open a circulating library in Aberdeen in 1764 also included from the outset such suggestive genres as Husbandry, Physick, Surgery, and Trade, though they were revealingly dropped from the title page of a catalogue issued in his second year of business – perhaps because such genres were so rarely in demand that Angus considered them superfluous. By 1779, he had added or reinstated Philosophy, Belles Lettres, Natural History, Trade and Commerce and Antiquities as genres that had evidently entered the definitive canon of polite literature in the intervening decade – at least according to this most experienced judge of the reading tastes of contemporary Aberdonians, who chose them specifically to sell his collection to the widest possible range of potential customers.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, analysis of the stocks of Scottish circulating libraries of this period confirms that novels were not always predominant. There were those that did conform to the stereotype, of course, especially in the big towns where serious-minded readers were already well supplied. In Glasgow, David Potter offered an exhaustive collection of novels and romances to complement the vast quantities of non-fiction offered by Stirling's Public Library (an endowed institution) and the Glasgow Public Library. James Chalmers in Dundee also focused almost exclusively on imaginative literature, but both Potter and Chalmers still stocked such Enlightenment classics as Hume's *History*, Kames's

<sup>63</sup> White.

<sup>64</sup> *A Catalogue of Books for a Circulating Library ... Which are lent to Read ... by Alexander Angus and Son* (Aberdeen, 1775); *A New Catalogue of the Aberdeen Circulating Library... Which are lent... by Alexander Angus and Son* (Aberdeen, 1779; 1787, Appendix; 1790, New Appendix).

*Sketches* and Robertson's major histories.<sup>65</sup> There must have been others, especially in smaller towns and villages in rural Scotland, that focused almost entirely on imaginative literature, small ventures such as John Smith's Public Library in Beith (217 titles in 1834), which stocked the complete novels of Mackenzie, Smollett and Scott in a collection made up almost exclusively of fiction.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear that many proprietors offered novels only as a small portion of a much broader collection. Angus & Sons, for instance, was one of the most complete libraries of any type in the entire country, supplying borrowers with all the latest researches in moral and natural philosophy, and complementing a small selection of the most esteemed novelists with runs of the pre-eminent poets, playwrights and historians of the age. Of Scottish authors, the collection featured the principal agricultural works of James Anderson and Adam Dickson alongside Kames's more established *Gentleman Farmer*; the poetry of 'Ossian' Macpherson, Wilkie, Burns and Fergusson; the canonical books of Beattie, Blair, Campbell, Ferguson, Hume, Hutcheson, Kames, Mackenzie, Reid, Robertson and Smith; as well as significant works of local writers whose work was far less widely distributed beyond Scotland, including Blackwell, Gerard, William Duff and George Turnbull.<sup>67</sup>

Alexander Brown's library, also in Aberdeen, had less than 800 novels out of a total of 4,042 books. 1,102 titles were included under the division "History, Voyages, and Travel, Law etc.," and 712 fell into a strange category cobbled together from "Divinity, Natural History, and Philosophy, plus Agriculture, Botany, etc."<sup>68</sup> Together these two categories encompassed such important Scottish works as Blackwell's *Memoirs*, Blair's *Sermons* and *Lectures*, Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles* and *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Cullen's *Materia Medica*, Dunbar's *Essays on the History of Mankind*, Ferguson's *Essay*, Hume's *Dialogues*

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<sup>65</sup> *Catalogue of The Circulating Library of David Potter & Co. No. 2 Brunswick Place, Glasgow...* (Glasgow, 1811), held at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; *Catalogue of the French and English Circulating Library of James Chalmers, Bookseller and Stationer, Castle Street, Dundee* (Dundee, 1818), held at Dundee Central Library; compare with the novel-heavy stock of Anthony Soulby's library at Penrith, which held Hume and Robertson amongst many fashionable novels, Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 136.

<sup>66</sup> *Catalogue of Books in John Smith's Public Library, Town-Buildings, Beith* (Beith, 1834); compare with John Rogers' Library at Stafford, which in 1825 held 350 books, all novels; Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 138.

<sup>67</sup> *A New Catalogue of the Aberdeen Circulating Library.*

<sup>68</sup> This material derives from Kaufman, 237.

and *Natural History of Religion*, Innes's *Critical Essay*, Kames's *Gentleman Farmer*, Monboddo's *Origin of Language*, Sinclair's *Statistical Account*, Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History* and Stewart's *Elements*.<sup>69</sup> Besides catering for their fictional entertainment, Brown's catalogue therefore allowed customers to engage in some of the most important debates of the Scottish Enlightenment, and also seems to have promoted particularly the work of eminent local authors – including Blackwell, Campbell, Reid and Anderson.

Nicoll's stock in Dundee consisted of much less than 20% novels, and though his library was conspicuously short on religious and philosophical works, in general "the extensive stock of solid, standard works bespeaks a nucleus of earnest readers". Nicoll offered all of the major polite historians, including Ferguson, Gillies, Guthrie, Henry, Hume, Kames, Robertson, Smollett, Stuart and Watson, as well as celebrated Scottish moralistic and aesthetic texts like Hutcheson's *Inquiry and Essay*, Blair's *Lectures*, Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, Fordyce's *Dialogues concerning Education* and James Gregory's *Philosophical and Literary Essays*. As Kaufman concludes, "obviously this could have had no connection with the unnamed bookseller whom James Beattie described in 1793" – especially since Beattie's own *Essay on Truth* was one of the few philosophical staples Nicoll supplied.<sup>70</sup>

Sibbald's Library in Edinburgh was perhaps the most liberal of all, and certainly the largest.<sup>71</sup> Of over 6,000 titles, around 20% were novels once more, with a further 19% being poetry, plays and the *belles lettres*. History also accounted for 19% of the collection, confirming once again its significance in the reading tastes of Georgian Scotland, while 13% was portioned off for works on the arts and sciences (mostly of a technological or manufacturing bent), and decidedly different markets were targeted by Sibbald's French and Italian books (9%) and music (5%).<sup>72</sup> Sibbald also had the medical market cornered in what

<sup>69</sup> *Enlarged Catalogue of the New Aberdeen Circulating Library, ... by A. Brown* (Aberdeen, 1795).

<sup>70</sup> Kaufman, 243; *Catalogue of the New Circulating Library*.

<sup>71</sup> My analysis of Sibbald's stock derives from Crawford, "Origins", 87; Kaufman, 239–41; and *A New Catalogue of the Edinburgh Circulating Library containing twenty thousand volumes, English, French and Italian ... which are lent ... By J. Sibbald* (Edinburgh, 1786). A previous owner of the NLS copy has marked with a "+" sign many of the medical books in Sibbald's stock, illustrating how his library could be used as a specialist professional reference library.

<sup>72</sup> On music provision, see H. Lenneberg, "Early Circulating Libraries and the Dissemination of Music", *Library Quarterly*, 52 (1982), 122–30; D. Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1972).



was arguably Britain's preeminent scientific community by the end of the century, with over 7% of the collection being taken up by works of anatomy, medicine and physics. Besides the *Edinburgh Medical Essays*, Sibbald was unique amongst British circulating library proprietors in offering the complete medical works of Cullen, Francis Home, Benjamin Bell, the two Andrew Duncans (father and son), Charles Alston, James Lind, Sir William Fordyce, George Cleghorn, Alexander Hamilton, John Hunter and Robert Whytt, as well as a manuscript copy of Black's lectures on chemistry – perhaps betraying a concrete link with Edinburgh's world famous medical school that must have made absolute commercial sense.<sup>73</sup>

Far from being monopolised by novels, then, Scottish circulating libraries in the major cities offered a range of literature that would appeal to the different constituencies of readers who made use of their facilities. This was even more urgently the case for provincial booksellers like William White and George Miller, who presumably had a much smaller consumer base and who thus had to tailor their collections to the peculiar demands of their regular borrowers – or else soon fail in the manner of Farquhar at Peterhead.<sup>74</sup> This must explain the predominance in White's collections of works of divinity and ecclesiastical history, which probably reflected the number of clergymen who frequented White's establishments in the absence of any real alternative in north-western Ayrshire.<sup>75</sup>

More generally, White's collection was exceptionally strong given its relatively small size. Bestselling authors such as Beattie, Blair, Kames, Robertson and 'Ossian' Macpherson were complemented with much rarer Scottish material, including Millar's *Distinction of Ranks* (the only copy available for rent outside Glasgow and Aberdeen), Blackwell's *Life of Homer*, Ferguson's *Institutes*, Fordyce's *Art of Preaching*, Francis Home's *Principles of Agriculture and Experiments on Bleaching*, Jamieson's *Essay on Virtue and Harmony*, MacLaurin's *Treatise of Algebra*, Shaw's *History of Moray*, Ure's *History of Rutherglen* and

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<sup>73</sup> A number of distinct Medical Circulating Libraries are listed on Alston; cf A. Bunch, *Hospitals and Medical Libraries in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1975).

<sup>74</sup> David Mclellan's *Statistical Account* for Beith listed White as the only bookseller in the town, and it is likely that White's shops in Irvine and Beith were the only source of books within a twelve mile radius (apart from private libraries); OSA, 6: 71.

<sup>75</sup> The Margate Circulating Library offered an extraordinary 600 Sermons, which led Kaufman to speculate "how much of the religious was window-dressing"; "Community Library", 17.

Smellie's *Treatise on Midwifery*.<sup>76</sup> The last title appears particularly suggestive, though White's catalogue actually listed just sixteen works on medicine overall – besides the inevitable inclusion of Buchan's layman's guide to *Domestic Medicine*. Clearly there was very little demand for specialist medical literature in an area that only sustained a handful of medical professionals.<sup>77</sup>

In contrast to the predominance of serious and devotional literature at White's Library, Caldwell's Library in Paisley showed a marked preference for secular and imaginative literature, with works on "Religion and Church History" accounting for less than 10% of the whole collection. "History, Biography, Voyages and Travels" made up a little over 20% of the collection, but "Novels and Romances" 45%. Even so, Caldwell still stocked a respectable collection of polite Scottish historiography, including such rare regional histories as Semple's *History of Renfrewshire* (published locally in Paisley) and Gibson's *History of Glasgow*, as well as that general purpose guide to the leading ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Moreover, since the library was originally based on his own personal collection, the rental catalogue still reflected Caldwell's own highly unusual philosophical interests in its coverage of many of Hume's principal works, but not those of his popular opponents – notably Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles* and Oswald's *Appeal to Common Sense*.<sup>78</sup>

The surviving catalogue of Alexander Davidson's Library in Inverness provides further evidence for the relative prominence of imaginative literature, especially in comparing the contents of the original 1782 catalogue with the Appendix of additions to the Library dated 1783. With novels already accounting for around 29% of the collection by 1782, 183 further such titles were added in 1783 – accounting for nearly a third of all acquisitions that year. By contrast, only twenty five more works on Divinity and Ecclesiastical History were added to the collection in 1783, a strong indication that the 85 religious titles already offered by Davidson before then could not have been a major source of income. Instead, Davidson seems to have concentrated on bringing

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<sup>76</sup> White.

<sup>77</sup> According to the *Statistical Account*, there were three medical practitioners in Beith (two surgeons and one druggist) and six in Irvine (three surgeons, two druggists and one physician), OSA, 6: 71, 244.

<sup>78</sup> Paisley Circulating Library.

in more “History and Antiquaries”, more “Geography, Travels and Voyages”, more “Natural History, Husbandry and Agriculture” and many more “Plays”, all core constituents of polite culture, and presumably the more profitable parts of his Library. Books added in 1783 included collections of standard farces and tragedies for the stage, Alexander’s *History of Women*, Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, Montesquieu’s *L’Esprit*, Mackenzie’s *Julia de Roubigne*, Johnson’s *Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland*, John Gregory’s *Comparative View* and Macpherson’s *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. In dramatic contrast to White, Davidson’s Library in Inverness offered nearly forty works on medicine, catering both for the layman through Buchan’s ubiquitous *Domestic Medicine* and for the many specialists who made Inverness their base in the Highlands through rarer and more technical works like Monro’s *Anatomy of the Human Bones* and Smellie’s *Treatise on Midwifery*.<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately, such evidence for circulating libraries is exceptionally rare. Of 280 known institutions for the period between 1725 and 1830, only 25 surviving catalogues have so far been located – 17 of which relate to circulating libraries in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Dundee.<sup>80</sup> Yet despite the small size and potentially unrepresentative distribution of our sample we can be sure from the foregoing survey that circulating libraries were not always the relentless purveyors of fictional pap that they were made out to be – a finding consistent with recent research on commercial library provision elsewhere in the English-speaking world. As John Brewer points out for England, “the number of novels and romances was never as great as those of history, travels and geography; indeed, for every ‘frivolous’ volume there were two of more serious reading matter”.<sup>81</sup> Norbert Schürer insists that the Londoners who borrowed books from the library managed by Thomas Lowndes “preferred more non-fictional literature such as history and travels over fictional genres such as novels and romances”.<sup>82</sup> In Ireland

<sup>79</sup> Davidson.

<sup>80</sup> Varma argues that the survival of catalogues with over 75% of serious, non-fictional stock represents a significant skew in the sample, arguing that it was the catalogues of the larger, more prestigious institutions that tended to survive: “the very fact of their having been accepted as serious documents may account for their survival”, *Evergreen Tree*, 66; for a similar point, see D. Knott, “Thomas Wilson and *The Use of Circulating Libraries*”, *LH*, 4 (1976–1978), 2–10.

<sup>81</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures*, 177.

<sup>82</sup> Schürer, “Lowndes Circulating Library”, 331.

“enterprising” circulating libraries in isolated rural communities offered serious-minded readers “opportunities to dip into necessary and new publications”,<sup>83</sup> whilst “books of history, biography and travel maintained a firm grip on their share of shelf space” well into the 1820s in early Republican America – with Robertson’s *History of Scotland* remaining a very firm favourite.<sup>84</sup>

The reality in Scotland was that novels usually occupied a proportion of between a fifth and a third of such collections, always offered alongside large quantities of more serious- and practical-minded forms of literature.<sup>85</sup> This was equally true of the small town ventures run by White, Forsyth and Caldwell as it was of the larger, more prestigious circulating libraries in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, in spite of Varma’s speculation that “the smaller had perhaps nothing other than fiction to amuse and entertain the general reader”.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, even provincial circulating libraries replicated in many fundamental respects the holdings of associational libraries and private libraries, offering the same canonical texts that were most popular throughout Britain – notably Hume’s *History and Essays*, Robertson’s histories, Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*, Blair’s *Sermons* and Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*.

Most importantly, perhaps, every self-respecting library surveyed here stocked the periodical reviews that were such an important agent of critical consumption in Enlightenment Scotland. Even William White stocked the *Scots Magazine* and the *Monthly Review* at his shops in Irvine and Beith, while George Caldwell was by no means exceptional in offering the *Critical Review*, the *Literary Magazine*, the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, the *Scots Magazine*, the *Town and Country Magazine* and the *Lady’s Magazine* at Paisley. Indeed, such was the popularity of the critical reviews that they were often the only non-circulating elements of commercial collections, or else they were subject to special restrictions. By 1789, for instance, Caldwell had introduced an “Extraordinary” subscription rate for customers wishing to borrow any of his magazines. “Extraordinary Subscribers” were required to “engage for a year, and pay Twelve Shillings at the time of

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<sup>83</sup> Toby Barnard, “Libraries and Collectors”, in Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book Volume III: The Irish Book in English 1550–1800* (Oxford, 2006), 118.

<sup>84</sup> Kaser, *Book for Sixpence*, 65–7.

<sup>85</sup> See Allan, *Nation of Readers*, 134–43; Kaufman, “Community Library”, 14.

<sup>86</sup> Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 66.

subscribing" (the usual annual subscription rate being nine shillings), and in return were allowed to borrow individual numbers of magazines for just two nights. As with Forsyth's proposed reading room, Caldwell may have intended to take advantage of increased interest in the unprecedented political upheaval reported by the periodical press in 1788–9, but it is quite conceivable that he had imposed the "extraordinary" rate well before then to profit from readers' obsession with critical culture. After all, Forsyth's venture (also coincidentally founded in 1789) was never intended simply to be a "political" reading room, but was instead dubbed the "Literary and Commercial News-Room".

## V

Although their catalogues are immensely useful in suggesting the kind of literature circulating libraries offered consumers, they do not represent concrete proof that the books of the Scottish Enlightenment were read with any frequency – for the very reasons we have discussed at length in previous chapters. In this instance, proprietors of circulating libraries had every reason to offer books that would appeal to their core markets, so the choice of what books to stock must reflect to a large degree each proprietor's assessment of their potential profitability – based in large part, no doubt, on their own reading of the critical reviews.<sup>87</sup> As Kaufman suggests, "no proprietor continues, year after year, to maintain any appreciable proportion of unread books".<sup>88</sup> However, even this realisation gives no help in assessing the relative popularity of specific titles amongst borrowers, and some circulating librarians doubtless made mistakes in reading demand (and the reviews) by staking all on specialist materials – including Sibbald himself, whose incredible diversity may well have contributed to declining profitability and the decision to sell the Library in 1793.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Hocquet Caritat, a French bookseller who operated a vast circulating library in New York between 1797 and 1804, "scoured the European reviews and journals for the comments of critics and pored over booksellers' catalogues striving constantly to enhance his offerings to the public"; Kaser, *Book for Sixpence*, 57.

<sup>88</sup> Kaufman, 277; see also, Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, 65.

<sup>89</sup> The deletion of much of Sibbald's philosophical, anatomical, surgical and ecclesiastical stock from the 1800 catalogue suggests that "the demand had therefore either decreased or had never warranted the supply"; Kaufman, 239.

As we discovered in Chapter Two, what we really need in assessing the contribution of libraries to the circulation of literature is their borrowing records. Unfortunately, the sole surviving commercial borrowing register in Scotland raises more questions than it answers.<sup>90</sup> In the first place, the Chambers Circulating Library was hardly typical of the other libraries we have studied in this chapter. Flourishing in the late 1820s, the library belonged to a later generation than those of White, Davidson and Forsyth, despite the latter's longevity. Moreover, its surviving muniments (the borrowing ledger dates from 1828, a surviving catalogue from 1829) post-date by nearly 30 years surviving catalogues for significant metropolitan libraries run by Angus or Sibbald. Furthermore, the Chambers Library was itself a metropolitan library, with premises in Hanover Street, Edinburgh, and serving a clientele drawn mostly from the most fashionable addresses in the New Town. The Chambers Circulating Library hardly constitutes the kind of provincial consumption that we are primarily concerned with in this study, even if Chambers had some customers beyond the city's immediate environs.

Nevertheless, the Chambers Library borrowing ledger provides a unique opportunity to glimpse the role of commercial circulating libraries in facilitating reading experiences, with intriguing implications.<sup>91</sup> Robert Chambers made approximately 10,000 loans in the twelve months covered by the ledger. Besides periodicals like *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *New Monthly Magazine*, whose predominance once more suggests that the critical reviews were every bit as important in shaping literary consumption at commercial libraries as they were at the Selkirk and Wigtown Subscription Libraries, loans were dominated by novels and other works of fiction. Popular titles included many classics of the modern literary canon such as John Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* and the novels of Jane Austen, as well as books which enjoyed far less long-lasting fame, such as *Pelham, or the Adventures of a Gentleman* and *Salathiel, a Story of the Past, Present and Future*. Inevitably, Sir Walter Scott was a great favourite. *Tales of a Grandfather*, whose impending release had been advertised in the critical reviews

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<sup>90</sup> My analysis of borrowings based on the Chambers Borrowing Ledger.

<sup>91</sup> Compare Fergus, "Eighteenth-Century Readers"; *ibid.*, "Provincial Servants' Reading".

throughout 1827, was one of the most popular works in the whole collection, while all of his novels and narrative poetry were borrowed with great regularity – particularly relatively recent releases such as *Quentin Durwood*, *Redgauntlet* and *Ivanhoe*.<sup>92</sup>

In sharp contrast, barely any non-fiction was borrowed from the Chambers Library in 1828. Volumes of the *Statistical Account* were borrowed on four occasions, as was a collected edition of Mackenzie's *Mirror* magazine, while Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* was borrowed three times. The 1829 catalogue confirms that Chambers also stocked standard non-fiction like Robertson's *History of Scotland* and Charles V, Arnot's *History of Edinburgh* and Kames's *Sketches*, and even some rarer works like John Anderson's *Prize Essay on the Present State of Knowledge in the Highlands* and Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Times*.<sup>93</sup> However, one searches in vain for a single verifiable loan of such books in the surviving ledge. A "History of Scotland" (probably by Robertson or his continuator Laing) was borrowed twice, while the "History of Edinburgh" (also unattributed, but almost certainly Arnot's) was borrowed just once, but these remain the only conceivable candidates.

On the face of it, then, Chambers's borrowing records would seem to justify St Clair's insistence that "the business of most English circulating libraries was...to rent out the latest novels and romances when they first appeared."<sup>94</sup> However, it would be extremely presumptive to extrapolate such conclusions to other Scottish circulating libraries in our period. The Chambers Library, we should not forget, was hardly representative of the type of library that concerns us here, and customers of Forsyth, White and Caldwell (like the proprietors themselves) occupied a very different mental and material world from those of Robert Chambers. Moreover, it is probable that Chambers's customers had already read books like Robertson's *History of Scotland* or Arnot's *History of Edinburgh* by 1828. The library had stocked them for at least five years before then and both works were standard issue in the

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<sup>92</sup> For the reception of Scott in English circulating libraries, see St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 245–6; C. Skelton-Foord, "Walter Scott and the engendering of the popular novel: circulating library holdings of British fiction 1805–1819", in W. Huber (ed.), *The Corvey Library and Anglo-German cultural exchanges, 1770–1837* (Munich, 2004), 101–16; Raven, "Libraries", 256. Circulating libraries across Britain were "reckoned to have made thousands of pounds by lending Waverley novels"; Manley, "Engines of Literature", 514. For Scott's conquest of American circulating libraries, see Kaser, *Book for Sixpence*, 64–5.

<sup>93</sup> *Catalogue of Chambers' Circulating Library*.

<sup>94</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 244.

drawing rooms of Queen Street and Charlotte Square by the first decades of the new century, even as luminaries like Robertson and Kames slowly passed out of critical fashion – to be replaced, no doubt, by the novels of Sir Walter Scott.

## VI

It is certainly possible to believe, with St Clair, Varma and others, that circulating libraries occupied a specific niche in the literary market place, offering the kind of light literature that associational and endowed libraries tended to avoid. The Chambers Circulating Library fulfilled precisely that role amongst the fashionable set of New Town Edinburgh in the late 1820s, but it is quite misleading in our attempts to understand reading habits in provincial towns in the high age of the Scottish Enlightenment. There are sure indications that in such environments circulating libraries had to serve a more general purpose to remain commercially viable, not dramatically different from other types of library. Ultimately, it made perfect financial sense that readers in such provincial towns as Elgin, Inverness, Irvine and Beith could get their fill of Hume, Robertson, et al from commercial circulating libraries, regardless of the hostile propaganda that surrounded them. If nothing else, the ubiquitous instruments of critical culture ensured the wide availability of approved Scottish Enlightenment books on rental shelves: commercial library operators were dependent for their livelihoods on their reading of literary trends, and few appear to have risked profit by ignoring the capacity of critical reviews to influence consumers' choices. That some, like Isaac Forsyth of Elgin, claimed a formative role in shaping local reading tastes in their own right simply enhances the impression that the circulation of books in provincial Scotland was never simply a matter of individual choice, but was instead relentlessly manipulated by members of the literary establishment – whether by the authors themselves and their publishers, by the literary critics who reviewed their books, or by the booksellers and library owners who stocked them. Although more clearly the planned product of edificatory benevolence rather than simple consumer demand, endowed and religious libraries offered provincial Scots yet more opportunities to encounter the major works of the Scottish Enlightenment, and it is to these we now turn.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### “A TASTE FOR READING IN THE COUNTRY”: RELIGIOUS AND ENDOWED LIBRARIES

In November 1790, one of the bestselling historical writers of the Scottish Enlightenment lay dying at his country home, Millfield, near Polmont in south-east Stirlingshire. As he looked around at the precious books he had collected over a lifetime of earnest scholarship and erudition, he made a far-reaching decision:

I Doctor Robert Henry one of the ministers of Edinburgh being desirous to dispose of my small library as the foundation of a greater, and to excite a Taste for reading and information in the people of this country have resolved to make over the same in perpetuity...[to] the magistrates and town council of the burgh of Linlithgow.<sup>1</sup>

Though he clearly intended the library to be a gift to posterity every bit as enlightening as his *History of Great Britain* (1771–1793), little more is known about Henry’s Linlithgow Library. One of the local clergymen charged with realising Henry’s intentions, James Dobbie, drew attention to the “general utility” of the bequest in his report on the parish for the *Statistical Account* in 1795, confirming that room had already been found to accommodate the library in the suitably civic surroundings of the town hall – but thereafter the historical record falls silent.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Henry’s final act of enlightening generosity actually continued a long tradition in Scottish cultural history, with the library of the University of Edinburgh (Henry’s own *alma mater*) founded on the similarly benevolent bequest of Clement Little in 1580.<sup>3</sup> The survival of borrowing records from a remarkable succession of such endowed and religiously-inspired libraries, founded largely in the seventeenth century, allows us to add extensive evidence of book loans to our

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<sup>1</sup> NAS B48/18/45, Reg’d Gift of Mortification of Library. Doctor Robert Henry to The Town Council and Presbytery of Linlithgow, 1790; ODNB.

<sup>2</sup> OSA, 14: 568, 576.

<sup>3</sup> NAS GD122/2/818, Catalogue of books given to the library of Edinburgh by Clement Littill, 1580; David Cuthbertson, *The Edinburgh University Library* (Edinburgh, 1910).

speculations about how such institutions influenced provincial culture in the age of Enlightenment.

# I

Religious library provision in Scotland has a proud if somewhat obscure past.<sup>4</sup> In 1699 James Kirkwood published *An Overture for Founding and Maintaining of Bibliotheks in every paroch throughout this Kingdom*.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, the bold scheme was limited to those areas where books were most scarce, with around 70 collections being established mostly in the Highlands and Islands by the General Assembly between 1704 and 1709. These collections typically consisted of between 60 and 130 volumes, covering a range of titles that apparently went well beyond religious subjects. Although very little is known about how they functioned they were clearly intended to be open to all members of the community (upon payment of a deposit). As Kirkwood had written in the original plan, “he [the librarian] was to lend books out only to heritors of the parish, to ministers of the presbytery, and to such residents in the parish as should find sufficient caution”.<sup>6</sup> Kaufman was convinced that such libraries were “potentially at least major sources of culture, secular as well as religious”,<sup>7</sup> but the fate of most remains clouded in mystery. Some undoubtedly found their way into private collections, while many others were lost through accident or violent action. The Kirkwood Library kept by Daniel Mackilligin at Alness, for instance, was destroyed by a Highland raiding party in 1718.<sup>8</sup> Three were mentioned in Sir John Sinclair’s *Statistical Account* in the 1790s, while only

<sup>4</sup> For the fullest account, see Aitken, 8–17.

<sup>5</sup> ODNB.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Aitken, 9. Kirkwood’s scheme came about at a time when there was increasing interest in parish libraries throughout the British Isles, though Kirkwood apparently granted his librarians “a much more liberal remit” than the schemes instigated throughout England and Wales by Thomas Bray and on the Isle of Man by Thomas Wilson; see W. M. Jacob, “Libraries for the Parish: Individual Donors and Charitable Societies” and G. Best, “Libraries in the parish”, both in *CHLB2*, quote from Best, 341.

<sup>7</sup> Kaufman, 274; cf. Kaufman, *Reading Vogues*; idem., “Readers and their Reading in Eighteenth-Century Lichfield”, *The Library*, 5th Series, 28 (1973), 108–15; E. Brunskill, *18th Century Reading: Some Notes on the People who Frequented the Library of York Minster in the Eighteenth Century, and on the Books they Borrowed* (York, 1950); S. Hingley, “Ecclesiastical Libraries: Libraries for the Higher Clergy” and J. Williams, “Ecclesiastical Libraries”, both in *CHLB2*, 122–33, 313–23.

<sup>8</sup> Aitken, *Public Library Movement*, 12.

a handful more were found to be in existence in an enquiry conducted by the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in the early nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

Though the Kirkwood scheme may therefore appear to be a dead end for our purposes, one library at least survived to become a major force in provincial Scottish culture – the Dumfries Presbytery Library. Founded in around 1706, the original Kirkwood stock of around one hundred volumes was substantially enhanced through the century by a steady stream of donations, not least by William and Mary's physician-general, John Hutton, as early as 1708.<sup>10</sup> A 1784 catalogue listed 2,350 titles, putting the collection on a par with the Greenock Subscription Library, the Paisley Library Society and Isaac Forsyth's Elgin Circulating Library.<sup>11</sup> But we know far more about the functioning of the Dumfries Presbytery Library than simply the extent and shape of its collection due to the survival of a set of borrowing registers dating from 1732 to 1826. Although now extremely fragile, the borrowing registers demonstrate not only who was using the library and how often they were borrowing certain books, they also allow us to look more closely at the reception afforded to a number of key works of the Scottish Enlightenment.

In the first instance, it is possible to identify 140 individuals who borrowed from the library in this period. As Table 4.1 demonstrates, the overwhelming majority of these borrowers were associated with the church, with 57 ministers, 7 itinerant preachers and 27 students (mostly designated 'students of divinity' in the borrowing records) – perhaps a sign of the primary intention of the original Kirkwood scheme.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, it is abundantly clear that the 57 ministers who used the library also dominated loans from the library, accounting for at least 2,000 of nearly 2,700 loans that can be deciphered.<sup>13</sup> The preponderance of church ministers amongst the borrowers also

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 17; John Anderson, *Prize Essay on the State of Society and Knowledge in the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1807), 107.

<sup>10</sup> ODNB; OSA, 6: 30–1. On the early development of the Dumfries Presbytery Library, see George Shirley, *Dumfriesshire Libraries* (Dumfries, 1932). The Library was returned to the General Assembly in Edinburgh in 1885.

<sup>11</sup> *A Catalogue of the books in the Library Belonging to the Presbytery of Dumfries* (Dumfries, 1784).

<sup>12</sup> A considerable concern was that divinity students did not have access to books to continue their reading and studies in periods away from their divinity halls; see Jacob, "Libraries for the Parish", 78.

<sup>13</sup> Ewart Library, DG(02)f, Dumfries Presbytery Library: Issue Book, 1732–1826. It would be impossible to conduct a complete statistical survey of this source material

Table 4.1. Occupations of borrowers from the Dumfries Presbytery Library

Occupation	Number	Estimated borrowings
Ministers (including Episcopalian clergy)	57	2,000
Students	27	210
<i>Civis</i> (ie laymen)	22	200
Military Officers	7	60
Preachers	7	20
Schoolmasters	6	92
Merchants	6	60
Medical Professionals	3	26
Customs Official	1	21
Stationer	1	7
Lawyer	1	2

accounts for the geographical distribution of borrowers, with books lent to all corners of the Presbytery of Dumfries and as far afield as Kirkcudbright and Cumberland.

Nevertheless, the Dumfries Presbytery Library also continued to conform to Kirkwood's broader vision of a series of public libraries that should be available to secular members of the community. At least 92 loans were registered to the six schoolmasters identified in the borrowing registers, including George Chapman (1723–1806), the highly-esteemed rector of Dumfries Academy whose 38 borrowings included Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and Hume's *History*.<sup>14</sup> While two more of these schoolmasters eventually entered the ministry in their own right, borrowers also included seven

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because some of the notes of borrowings have been irrevocably obscured by the conversion of the loan book around 1767, when the log was changed to a personal loan record, with each person apportioned a page – with the index down the side. The consequent mutilation of all records in the book means that the first and fourth columns are regularly missing vital information, if they are legible at all.

<sup>14</sup> George Chapman, *Treatise on Education, with a sketch of the author's method of instruction while he taught the school of Dumfries, and a view of other books on education* (Edinburgh, 1773) reached a fifth edition in 1792, while his teaching is said to have drawn the compliments of Lord Kames, amongst others. He believed a classical education should extend to “a general view of the history of England, and the figures of rhetoric” (*Treatise of Education*, 79–80). He retired from teaching at Dumfries in 1774, though he continued to take private pupils in the area and only moved away in 1801 to establish a private academy in Banffshire; *ODNB*.

army officers, six merchants, three medical men, one stationer, one lawyer, one customs official and 22 laymen simply designated 'civis' by the librarian of the time. Major Ferguson of Isle loaned twenty-three books, including every volume of Hume's *History* and Robertson's *History of Scotland*. William Irvine, laird of Gribton ('civis'), borrowed 70 separate items, and was evidently another repeat borrower of Hume's *History*. The surgeon, Alexander Gordon, was responsible for borrowing thirteen volumes in 1750–1752, while William Bell, a merchant, also made thirteen loans including Robertson's *History of Scotland* on 20 November 1760.

In spite of the religious origins of the library, borrowings across the whole period were dominated by historical works, with only Shuckford's *Connections* and Butler's *Analogy* representing religion, as well as such ecclesiastical histories as Bower's *History of the Popes* and Burnet's *History of the Reformation*.<sup>15</sup> Naturally enough, the standard histories by Clarendon, Oldmixon and Rollin were all regularly withdrawn from the Dumfries bookshelves, reflecting the old-fashioned scope of early eighteenth-century bequests, as was the *Modern Universal History*, Dupin's *History of the Sixteenth Century*, Vertot's *History of the Revolutions in Spain* and Daniel's *History of France*. Other popular titles included periodicals like the *Annual Register*, an unidentified collection of voyages, Diogenes's *Lives of the Philosophers*, and, perhaps a measure of the intellectual capacity of Dumfries readers, Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

More importantly, the 1784 catalogue confirms that the Dumfries Presbytery Library held a small collection of titles that are now associated with the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>16</sup> For sure, the range of titles is a little more restricted than in other types of library, with no imaginative literature to speak of and very little philosophy or science. The absence of perennial favourites by Reid and Smith reflects the inevitable restrictions placed on readers' choices in this type of library, but the 1784 catalogue did include works by Ferguson, Kames, Robertson, Hume, Beattie, Campbell and Blair. With no acquisition records it is impossible to know when, how or why these authors were added to the collection. The best we can do is note when these titles first started being

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<sup>15</sup> Assessments of the general trends are derived from Kaufman and my own research.

<sup>16</sup> *Catalogue of Dumfries Presbytery Library*.

borrowed from the library. Hume's *History*, for instance, first appears in the borrowing register in November 1754 (borrowed by Robert Wight, minister of St Michael's in Dumfries, and active in the registers from 1733 to 1763), and was thus available the year it was first published. Robertson's *History of Scotland* and *History of America* were both borrowed the year after they were published, though his *Charles V*, published in 1762, was not borrowed until 1769, while Ferguson's *Essay* (published 1767, first borrowed 1769) and Francis Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755, 1758) were each borrowed soon after their publication. Indeed, of the Scottish Enlightenment titles in the 1784 catalogue, only Colin MacLaurin's *Account of Newton* shows a significant lag between its publication in 1748, and its first appearance in the Dumfries borrowing register in 1768 – probably a sign that it was not likely to be borrowed as often as a Robertson or Hume, rather than certain proof that it was only acquired in the 1760s. Of course, with only one catalogue to go by it is impossible to know which titles were added to the collection after its compilation in 1784 except those that turn up in the borrowing register. We know that Dugald Stewart's *Philosophical Essays* was eventually acquired because it was borrowed by Reverend Thomas Tudor Duncan (1776–1858) in the 1820s,<sup>17</sup> but we do not know if the library even owned copies of Reid's *Essays* or Smollett's *Continuation of Hume's History* (works that were regularly borrowed elsewhere), let alone the immensely popular works of Burns and Scott.

Given the problems involved in establishing when (or even if) the library acquired certain titles, the most fruitful way to test the reception of these texts by patrons of the Dumfries Presbytery Library is simply to analyse how many borrowed them. Of the 140 borrowers identified in the registers, the activity of some 45 can be shown to have predated the publication of Hume's *History* in 1754, including such influential borrowers as the prominent clergymen Edward Buncle (64 loans, active 1732–1748) and John Johnstone (51 loans, 1739–1750). A further 45 who were active past 1754 show no hint of Scottish Enlightenment borrowings, including the prolific John Scott (1697–1770), minister of Holywood, who registered 296 loans after 1732, as well as Thomas Lawson, a student with nineteen loans between 1762 and 1764. According to this basic test, then, just under a half of all

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<sup>17</sup> *Fasti*.

borrowers active after 1754 apparently showed no interest in the Enlightenment books available to them at Dumfries – though any of them may, of course, have encountered them elsewhere.

More intriguingly still, a small handful of readers borrowed books that explicitly sought to attack certain elements of the Scottish Enlightenment. William McMillan (1700–1764), minister of Torthorwald, borrowed Daniel MacQueen's virulent *Letters on Hume's History*, without apparently consulting Hume's original. Andrew Brown ('civis') was another who borrowed MacQueen's *Letters* without countering him with Hume, though MacQueen was borrowed alongside Hume by the more fair-minded John Ewart (1717–1799), minister of Troquire, contributor to the *Statistical Account* and one of the most prolific borrowers at Dumfries. Brown's isolated loan of MacQueen may well be put down to curiosity rather than any particular distaste for Hume himself (it was, after all, an unlikely addition to any private library), but when MacQueen was coupled with James Oswald's *Appeal to Common Sense*, one of the more successful attacks on Hume's sceptical philosophy, it is tempting to see a pattern emerging. This was the case with Bryce Johnson (1747–1805), another minister of Holywood, who registered MacQueen and Oswald amongst just ten borrowings overall, and Archibald Lawson (1719–1796), minister of Kirkmahoe – though Lawson also borrowed Kames's *Sketches*, Robertson's *History of Scotland* and Hume's *History* (at least twice). Even so, MacQueen was only borrowed by six individuals overall and Oswald by perhaps three and as Table 4.2 demonstrates some key works of the Scottish Enlightenment were a great deal more popular.

Hume's *History*, of course, proved to be absolutely dominant, with 27 individuals borrowing this mainstay of the Scottish Enlightenment at least once, constituting a third of all borrowers active after 1754. These included fifteen ministers, four students and a preacher, as well as seven laymen, the merchant Andrew Smith, Major Ferguson of Isle, another army officer, two schoolmasters and two men marked simply 'civis'. Another measure of the supreme popularity of Hume's *History* is the sheer number of readers who returned to Hume again and again. Robert Wight borrowed each of the six volumes at least once between November 1754 and March 1764, as did John Ewart between December 1754 and 1770, while Major Ferguson, the laird of Gribton, the student John Crockat and at least five more ministers were also repeat borrowers of Hume – with Wight, Andrew Beveridge (1703–1776) and George Duncan I (1692–1765) already old men by the time they

Table 4.2. Dumfries Presbytery Library, borrowers of selected titles

Author, title	Number of borrowers
Hume, <i>History of England</i>	27
Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i>	18
Kames, <i>Elements of Criticism</i>	10
Robertson, <i>Reign of Charles V</i>	9
MacQueen, <i>Letters on Hume's History</i>	6
Dalrymple, <i>Memoirs of Great Britain</i>	5
Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i>	5
Ferguson, <i>Essay on the History of Civil Society</i>	4
Robertson, <i>History of America</i>	4
Robertson, [unspecified]	4
Macpherson, <i>Works of Ossian</i>	3
Oswald, <i>Appeal to Common Sense</i>	3
Beattie, <i>Essay on Truth</i>	2
Gillies, <i>History of Ancient Greece</i>	2
Kames, <i>Sketches of the History of Man</i>	2
MacLaurin, <i>Account of Newton</i>	2
Montesquieu, <i>Works</i>	2
Stewart, <i>Philosophical Essays</i>	2
Campbell, <i>Dissertation on Miracles</i>	1
Ferguson, <i>History of the Roman Republic</i>	1
Hutcheson, <i>System of Moral Philosophy</i>	1

encountered Hume, in spite of what Beattie had to say about his impact on Scottish youth.<sup>18</sup>

Robertson's profile in the borrowing records is a good deal less clear cut, with the *History of Scotland* rating as one of the most frequently-loaned titles in the entire collection, but with the *History of America* borrowed by just two ministers and two students. Robertson's clerical colleagues were far and away the most consistent supporters of his historiography, with fourteen borrowing at least one of his works and ten borrowing the *History of Scotland*, though only Ewart borrowed

<sup>18</sup> Beattie's fear for the corruption of Scottish youth was reflected also in Hume's reception in America, where Abigail Adams was typical in writing, "I have a thousand fears for my dear Boys as they rise into Life, the most critical period of which is I conceive, at the university; there infidelity abounds, both in example and precepts, there they imbibe the specious arguments of a Voltaire a Hume and Mandevill", quoted by Spencer, *Hume's Reception*, 1: 83.



all three. Perhaps on the recommendation of their local ministers, students and unlicensed preachers also showed an occasional interest in Robertson, especially Joseph Kirkpatrick, a student who borrowed both *Charles V* and the *History of Scotland*. On the other hand, surprisingly few 'civis' readers loaned Robertson in light of lay enthusiasm for his works in provincial subscription libraries and private libraries, borrowers of the *History of Scotland* limited to two military officers, two schoolmasters, the merchant William Bell and the 'civis' George Vair.

The one obvious exception to the dominance of history is the profile of Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, borrowed by ten individuals in another reflection of the popularity of Scottish writing on taste. It may be, however, that Kames's *Elements* owed something of its popularity to the Dumfries Academy's headmaster, Chapman. Certainly, its borrowers in the 1770s included five students besides their headmaster, so it is conceivable that this work featured on the syllabus at the Academy – echoing curricula developments in the Scottish universities.<sup>19</sup> The suspicion that Kames's popularity at Dumfries reflected educational decree is enhanced by the fate of other philosophical works in the collection, which fared rather less well. The poor performance of Beattie's *Essay on Truth* is a particularly fine illustration of the limited capacity of the usual engines of critical culture to influence readers' choices in an endowed library. Beattie was lionised by the critical press as the popular tormentor of Hume, but even in the supposedly conservative halls of an ecclesiastical library he found little support – borrowed first in 1775 by the veteran John Marshall, minister of Lochmaben, and then only once more in 1777 by the Academy's brilliant young mathematics teacher James Dinwiddie.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kames's *Elements of Criticism* was also immensely popular with borrowers at the University of St Andrews Library, being the most frequently borrowed text in 1782 with twelve loans; Simpson, "St Andrews University Library", Appendix; Emerson, *Essays*, 49–76. Much work still needs to be done on school libraries in eighteenth-century Britain; see I. Green, "Libraries for School Education and Personal Devotion", in *CHLB2*, 47–64. For Scotland, the sole authority remains J. Grant, *History of Burgh and Parish Schools of Scotland* (London, 1876), 436–8.

<sup>20</sup> Dinwiddie (1746–1815) studied at the Dumfries Academy and the University of Edinburgh with the intention of entering the ministry, but had been "irrecoverably riveted by science" and taught mathematics at Dumfries Academy before embarking on a career as an itinerant lecturer and inventor; *ODNB*. Of course, any Dumfries borrower could have owned a copy of Beattie's *Essay*, which was frequently found in private collections and was available in the relatively inexpensive formats of octavo

One would be a great deal more surprised to find Hutcheson's *System of Morals* and MacLaurin's *Account of Newton* in a contemporary library catalogue than the relatively commonplace *Essay on Truth*. But with the added evidence of borrowing records for the Dumfries Presbytery Library, we can see that the fact of these works' inclusion in the 1784 catalogue – the result, presumably, of benevolent donation rather than of any coherent acquisitions policy – does not actually say very much about their circulation, still less their popularity in this particular corner of provincial Scotland. MacLaurin's popularisation of Newton attracted just two borrowers (both ministers), while Hutcheson's *System* was apparently taken from the shelves once in nearly a hundred years (by Ewart, on 1 November 1758).<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the failure of these works to attract readers, it remains clear that a religious library could facilitate access to at least some of the key works of the Scottish Enlightenment, and in the case of Dumfries we glimpse yet another confirmation of the sheer ubiquity of the historiography of William Robertson and, especially, David Hume. It was possible for determined readers to get a great deal out of the Dumfries collection. Reverend Ewart, whose leadership of the Dumfries militia against the Jacobites in 1745 and contribution to the *Statistical Account* in the 1790s framed an eminently enlightened career,<sup>22</sup> returned time and again to Hume, Robertson, Kames and Ferguson. He also borrowed material ranging from MacLaurin to MacQueen, from Hutcheson to the *Annual Register*, not to mention some of the most challenging continental authors (including Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu). But the collection had its limits, determined by the scope and terms of its original foundation, and by the quality and intellectual specialisms of its subsequent benefactors. The Dumfries Presbytery Library may ultimately have inspired its borrowers to pursue their passion for reading further, fostering the "desire of a small group to assemble secular reading far beyond the limits of the presbyterial collection".<sup>23</sup> After all, Dumfries witnessed the foundation of one of the very first subscription libraries in Britain, the Gentlemen's Library in around 1750, and a

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(Kincaid & Bell's original 1770 edition) and duodecimo (Ewing's 1773 edition, priced at 3s. 3d.); Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 640–1.

<sup>21</sup> J. Moore, "Hutcheson's Theodicy: The Argument and the contexts of *A System of Moral Philosophy*", in P. Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Rochester, 2000), 239–66.

<sup>22</sup> *Fasti*.

<sup>23</sup> Kaufman, 275.

second associational collection, the Dumfries Subscription Library, was established there in 1792.<sup>24</sup> It is inconceivable given all we know about associational reading that some of the merchants, military officers and ministers who frequented the Presbytery Library would not have been deeply involved.<sup>25</sup>

## II

Although source material relating to religious libraries is scant for most of our period, with Dumfries the glorious exception, borrowing registers also survive for the School Wynd Congregational Library of the United Association Secession Church in Dundee from 1825. The Library was open to all members of the congregation upon payment of a 6d. quarterly fee as security, though a managerial committee could also offer use gratis to those they “deem[ed] unable to pay the ordinary subscription”.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the Presbytery Library, the School Wynd Library was not primarily the preserve of church ministers, with perhaps only three or four active in the registers in the 1820s. Instead, the borrowing register testifies to a remarkably diverse readership in the lay community as readily demonstrated by Table 4.3, with thirteen manufacturers, nine shipmasters, seven merchants, three machine makers, three fleshers and two meal sellers.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, where the Dumfries Presbytery Library was apparently alien territory for the fairer sex (as named borrowers, at any rate), twenty-six women were active members of the School Wynd Library.

Apparently unknown by historians of reading before now, the borrowing registers do pose some problems.<sup>28</sup> Most problematic is the fact that for the entire period covered by the registers (1825 to later than 1880) titles borrowed from the library are only identified by code,

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<sup>24</sup> Alston; there is no firm data on when the Gentlemen's Library was founded, though it was in existence by the early 1750s.

<sup>25</sup> *Catalogue of Books in the Dumfries [Subscription] Library Taken November 1818* (Dumfries, 1819); *Catalogue of the Society Library [The Gentlemen's Library], Dumfries, taken 3rd June 1835; with a copy of the Library Regulations* (Dumfries, 1835).

<sup>26</sup> *Regulations and Catalogue of the Library belonging to the Congregation of the Secession Church, School Wynd, Dundee* (Dundee, 1832).

<sup>27</sup> The Dundee Central Library holds a number of commercial, congregational and residential directories for the city in the 1820s and 30s that allows us to identify borrowers' trades and occupations with a reasonable degree of certainty.

<sup>28</sup> Dundee City Archives, CH3/93/29, Library Registers of the School Wynd Congregation Library, 1825–c.1888.

Table 4.3. Occupations of male borrowers from the School Wynd Congregation Library (60 unidentified; 26 women)

Manufacturers	13
Ship masters	9
Grocers, merchants	7
Vintners	5
Writers	4
Customs officials, fleshers, machine makers, ministers, shoemakers, spirit dealers, tailors	3
Cabinet makers, clothiers, dealers, excisemen, ironmongers, meal sellers, painters, schoolmasters, wrights	2
Bleacher, brewer, candlemaker, cooper, dress maker, dyer, engraver, haberdasher, jeweller, mill manager, miller, mill-wright, nurseryman, postmaster, stoneware dealer, surgeon, tide surveyor, timber merchant, tobacco-pipe manufacturer, umbrella maker	1

a characteristic though usually insurmountable problem for those working with historical library registers.<sup>29</sup> At the School Wynd Library, however, the borrowers signed for the books they borrowed, allowing us to put a name to each loan, and the additional survival of a catalogue dated 1832 provides a probable key.<sup>30</sup> Each title in the catalogue is assigned a number, and the numbers in the borrowing registers correspond to the numbers in the catalogue – so Beattie’s *Minstrel*, catalogue number 37, was assigned page 37 in the borrowing register, while Hume’s *History* (catalogue numbers 201–213 inclusive) was assigned page numbers 201 to 213. Thus we can explore with some degree of certainty the reception of works in the catalogue, a realisation that may prove to be of immense value in tracing the congregation’s reading habits through the course of the nineteenth century.

For our purposes, the School Wynd borrowing registers suggest that the Dumfries readers’ passion for historical works, and especially for the historiography of Hume and Robertson, was shared by Congregationalists of this much later religious foundation. Hume’s *History* was borrowed on 232 occasions between 1825 and 1832 by 87 different individuals: not only was it therefore one of the most heavily

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Dumfries and Galloway Archives, Sanquhar Subscription Library Register.

<sup>30</sup> *Regulations and Catalogue of the Library belonging to the Congregation of the Secession Church, School Wynd, Dundee* (Dundee, 1832).

perused books in the small collection held by the Congregation Library, it was read by nearly a half of all borrowers during these early years, many of whom followed up with additional borrowings. Indeed, the unique arrangement of the School Wynd borrowing registers allows us to trace the reception of individual volumes of Hume's *History*, with the Stuart volumes being the most popular – especially volume ten of the thirteen-volume edition possessed by the library, which was borrowed by more individuals than any other volume and covered the crucial years of the English Civil War up to the trial and execution of King Charles I.<sup>31</sup> The popularity of the Stuart volumes at the School Wynd Library once again reflected their continued relevance for late Georgian party politics, which remained sharply delineated along the party lines (Whig vs. Tory) that had first emerged during the Civil War, the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution. Robertson was also well received, with the *History of America* the clear favourite, perhaps owing to the increasing international profile of an independent America in the 1820s. The *History of Scotland* evidently lagged slightly behind, although it was still one of the more popular works surveyed here (Robertson's sentimental treatment of Mary Queen of Scots proving especially popular with six women readers), with *Charles V* surprisingly registering less borrowers than the *Historical Disquisition on India* (perhaps bolstered by increased interest in Britain's affairs in India by the 1820s).

Although the School Wynd borrowing registers do therefore corroborate some of the main trends suggested by the Dumfries registers, there are a number of significant differences. As Table 4.4 shows, Henry's *History* outperformed Hume here, with the Moderate divine overtaking 'The Great Infidel' Hume as these evangelical readers' most trusted historical authority.<sup>32</sup> More significantly, Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and Reid's *Essays* appear amongst the most frequently borrowed books at the School Wynd Library, outperforming Robertson's historiography and Blair's popular *Lectures*. Neither had been acquired by the Dumfries Presbytery Library before 1784, nor did they attract a

<sup>31</sup> David Hume, *The History of England, from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688...* A new edition, printed by T. Cadell and sold by T. N. Longman, 13 vols. (London, 1793–1794).

<sup>32</sup> Robert Henry, *The History of Great Britain, from the first invasion of it by the Romans* (3rd edition, London, 1799–1800), 12 vols.; see ESTC N009056. Book 6 (volumes 11–2) was published posthumously with an appendix by Malcolm Laing.

Table 4.4. School Wynd Congregation Library, borrowings of selected titles 1826–1832

Author, <i>title</i>	Number of borrowers	Number of borrowings
Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i>	105	247
Hume, <i>History of England</i>	87	232
Smith, <i>The Wealth of Nations</i>	56	93
Reid, <i>Essays</i>	56	88
Robertson, <i>History of America</i>	38	63
Blair, <i>Lectures</i>	27	28
Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i>	25	60
Robertson, <i>Historical Disquisition on India</i>	20	23
Beattie, <i>Minstrel</i>	19	21
Gillies, <i>History of Ancient Greece</i>	18	39
Campbell, <i>Dissertation on Miracles</i>	17	17
Robertson, <i>Reign of Charles V</i>	16	26
Thomson, <i>The Seasons</i>	16	17

great deal of notice at the subscription libraries for which borrowing records survive. *The Wealth of Nations* was withdrawn by the cabinet-maker Nicol, manufacturer James Lindsay and Thomas Galloway, a nurseryman, as well as by ship masters William Law and Peter Martin for whom Smith's topic was particularly apposite. Reid's borrowers included the tobacco-pipe manufacturer Peter McLean, haberdasher James Gall and tailor David Honeyman, and his popularity here points towards his success in rescuing Christian orthodoxy from the ruinous scepticism unleashed by Hume.<sup>33</sup>

Not all religious libraries offered such liberal collections, of course. Founded originally as a subscription library in 1802,<sup>34</sup> a surviving catalogue of the Inverkeithing Evangelical Library proudly heralds the religious overtones this association had acquired by 1820 – and the

<sup>33</sup> Though usually in three volumes, four-volume editions of *The Wealth of Nations* had been released in Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1805 and 1814 respectively; see, for example, copies held by the NLS at shelfmarks NG.1299.c.3 and [Ab].4/1. Collected editions of Reid's *Essays* were commonplace in the early 1800s – see for example Thomas Reid, *Essays on the powers of the mind, to which is prefixed An account of the life and writings of the author* (By Dugald Stewart), 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1803).

<sup>34</sup> Alston.

collection gives further evidence of the single-minded devotion of the members. No Hume, Robertson, Reid, Smith or Blair here, let alone Scott or Burns; the small collection gathered at Inverkeithing consisted almost entirely of religious and devotional material, with sermons and ecclesiastical histories featuring heavily – including Crookshanks's *History of the Church of Scotland* and McCrie's fervently 'enthusiastic' *Life of Knox*.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, and though the School Wynd Congregation remains the only set of borrowing registers discovered to date, some secession church libraries did reflect the same openness to new kinds of literature. Of the catalogues, the Canal Street Relief Library in Paisley bears suggestive comparison. Founded around 1815, the Canal Street collection already numbered over a thousand volumes by 1817 when the only surviving catalogue was compiled.<sup>36</sup> Like the School Wynd Library, this Paisley library owned copies of Robertson's and Hume's histories, as well as Campbell *On Miracles* and Blair's *Lectures* – though Reid and Smith, seemingly great favourites of the School Wynd Congregationalists, were absent. Instead, the collection covered some of the more generally popular titles of the time – Gregory's *Father's Legacy*, Stewart's *Life of Robertson*, the second *Edinburgh Review*, the *Scots Magazine*, the *Lounger* and a collected edition of Ossian. The Paisley collection was also far stronger in continental literature, containing a copy of Buffon's *Natural History* (in Smellie's popular translation) and a set of Voltaire's *Works*.

More intriguing still is the comparison with the book collection of the Associate Synod Theological Hall, moved from Haddington to Selkirk in 1787 to allow George Lawson to continue as pastor there on his appointment as professor of Theology.<sup>37</sup> Catalogued in 1800, the library naturally enough reflected the reading tastes of the students' principal teacher, as well as the toleration for which he was renowned (see above, Chapter Two).<sup>38</sup> The polite historical works of Robertson

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<sup>35</sup> *Catalogue of Books in the Evangelical Library, Inverkeithing. Established, January 20, 1802* (Dunfermline, 1822).

<sup>36</sup> *Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Paisley Canal-street Relief Library, instituted 1815* (Paisley, 1817); cf. Kaufman, "Zion's Temple".

<sup>37</sup> *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993); Lawson, especially Ch6.

<sup>38</sup> *Catalogue of the Library of the Selkirk Theological Hall* (1800). In addition, Lawson was apparently quite happy for students to raid his own collection of books, and we cannot rule out the possibility that some made use of the Selkirk Subscription Library.

and Hume, with Smollett's *Continuation*, were counterbalanced by MacQueen's *Letters* and Stevenson's implacably Presbyterian *History of the Church and State of Scotland*, while the library was also strong in Scottish conjectural historiography – including Ferguson's *Essay*, Kames's *Sketches* and *The Wealth of Nations*. Students at the Selkirk Theological Hall could also access the philosophical works of Reid, apparently so popular with their co-religionists in Dundee, as well as Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, Oswald's *Appeal*, Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles*, Stewart's *Elements* and Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Moreover, and besides the evangelical fare offered by the Library's copy of Witherspoon's *Works*, these future secession ministers were also exposed to the published sermons of Moderate ministers John Farquhar, John Logan and Hugh Blair, never mind the philosophy of the Great Infidel himself, courtesy of Hume's *Essays and Treatises*.<sup>39</sup>

### III

A small number of endowed libraries also flourished in provincial Scotland in the age of Enlightenment, closely related, in motivation at least, to libraries like the Dumfries Presbytery Library and others of the Kirkwood scheme. According to John Crawford, there were around 20 such foundations actively loaning books during our period, including collections at Kirkwall (founded by William Blaikie of Stronsay, but merged with the Orkney Subscription Library in 1815), Rothesay (based on the library of Bishop Archibald Graham, although of uncertain relationship with the Subscription Library founded there in the 1790s), Jedburgh (established by Thomas Rutherford around 1714), Lochmaben (gifted by James Richardson, a merchant of Reading, in 1726), and Logie (founded around 1750 by Walter Bowman).<sup>40</sup> Little is

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One former student, Rev. Robert Simpson of Sanquhar, remembered that "The Hall library was by no means extensive, though it contained a fair collection of good books", quoted in *Lawson*, 292.

<sup>39</sup> One book which was explicitly banned from the Library was Paine's *Rights of Man*, Lawson decreeing that "he could not permit such books to have a place in their library, or to be circulated amongst them. Though attached to liberal principles, he was unwilling that they should engage as disputants or partisans in the political contests of the day"; *Lawson*, 293.

<sup>40</sup> Alston; Crawford, "Origins", 54–5; Aitken contains a description of the Blaikie mortification at Kirkwall, *Public Library Movement*, 3–6; the Lochmaben bequest is described in *OSA*, 7: 244; for Walter Bowman (1699–1782), tutor, antiquary and celebrated traveler, see *ODNB*.



known about the bulk of these charitable bequests. However, documentary evidence does survive for three endowed libraries (at Haddington, Dunblane and Innerpeffray) which demonstrate that each allowed readers to encounter the Scottish Enlightenment, in spite of their early foundation and the limited scope of their original collections.

The earliest foundation of the three was the library founded at Innerpeffray by David Drummond, 3rd Lord Madertie, in two wills dated 1680 and 1691, “for the benefit and encouragement of young students”.<sup>41</sup> Hidden away in a remote and relatively inaccessible part of rural Perthshire, four miles from the nearest town of Crieff, the Innerpeffray Library has long held an honoured place in library history in Scotland, and continues to attract hundreds of visitors annually, primarily from the British Isles and North America. In assessing the “unique record of a people’s reading” to be found preserved in the library room at Innerpeffray, Paul Kaufman argued that the survival of an almost unbroken sequence of borrowing records from 1747 until the cessation of lending in 1968 offers a “tragically rare” opportunity to open a “window” into the use of books in Scotland in the past – so representing “one of the all too scanty sources of re-creating the life of the Scottish people”.<sup>42</sup>

Though isolated today, the Library actually occupied a propitious position in eighteenth-century Scotland. Lying near a major crossing point of the River Earn in use since the Roman occupation, Innerpeffray actually stood at a major junction in the Scottish cattle trade, thereby supporting a surprisingly substantial local population. This is demonstrated by the wide social distribution of the 287 individuals who borrowed books from the library free of charge in our period, including at least 27 different occupations besides the ubiquitous “esq.” or country gentleman. This included professionals and middling sorts who formed the bedrock of associational reading in this period, Church of Scotland ministers, medical men, army officers, schoolmasters, farmers, estate factors, manufacturers and merchants – the kind of men who might otherwise have founded their own subscription library in Crieff before 1818, if they had not had Innerpeffray.<sup>43</sup> Also represented, though, are a wide range of less affluent trades and vocations including barbers, coopers, dyers (and a dyer’s apprentice), flaxdressers, gardeners,

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted by Kaufman, “Unique Record”, 227.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>43</sup> Alston.

glovers, quarriers, servants, smiths, tailors, weavers and wrights, further indication that reading in Scotland, as elsewhere, was a recreation that reached far down the social scale in the age of Enlightenment.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Innerpeffray was yet another venue where women could become engaged in the world of books, with eleven women borrowing books from the library before 1800.<sup>45</sup>

Though the original bequest dated to the seventeenth century, Enlightenment books were available thanks to the generosity of the founder's grandson, Robert Hay Drummond (1711–1776), a confidante of the royal family and Archbishop of York from 1761, whose own books were gifted to the Library on his death.<sup>46</sup> Hay Drummond had kept abreast of the latest developments in historiography, science and philosophy (he was known to be a keen admirer of Ferguson's *Essay*),<sup>47</sup> and his bequest to the Innerpeffray Library reflected his status both as a major figure in public life and as a senior member of one of Scotland's major landholding families, the Hay Earls of Kinnoull. Not only did he own copies of Robertson's historiography and Arnot's *History*, he also owned rarer books such as MacLaurin's *Account of Newton*, Francis Home's *Experiments on Bleaching*, Gerard's *Essay on Genius* and even Hume's exceptionally rare *Treatise of Human Nature* – all of which were duly put at the disposal of Innerpeffray readers.

On the face of it, however, the Innerpeffray Library borrowing registers suggest that Enlightenment made little progress in this particular corner of provincial Scotland. 370 titles were borrowed between 1747 and 1800 (out of a total of nearly 4,000 titles overall), and their distribution by category is usually cited for the prevalence of devotional material – and thus for the continuing interest at this 'working-class' library in traditional reading matter at the expense of the recent historiography and philosophy of the Enlightenment.<sup>48</sup> Significantly more religious titles were borrowed than those from any other category, with

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<sup>44</sup> R. McKeen Wiles, "The Relish for Reading in Provincial England Two Centuries Ago", in Paul J. Korshin (ed.), *The Widening Circle: Essays on the Circulation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia PA, 1976), 85–116.

<sup>45</sup> This summary of the social distribution of Innerpeffray readers is based on borrowers' own notes, Kaufman's "Unique Record" and my own research in the usual sources.

<sup>46</sup> ODNB.

<sup>47</sup> The Archbishop's first encounter with the *Essay* is recorded in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1932), 2: 121; and *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, ed. Vincenzo Merolle, 2 vols (London, 1995), 1: 71–2.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, 176–8.

171 compared to 85 books on history, law and politics, eighteen agricultural texts and just eight on mathematics and science.<sup>49</sup>

Broken down in another way, however, a closer analysis of the 1,483 loans from this first period suggests that enlightened literature did not pass Innerpeffray readers by entirely – quite the contrary, in fact. With 46 loans, Robertson's *Charles V* was actually the most regularly borrowed title in this period by some margin, and other Enlightenment books fared similarly well. Robertson's *America* was borrowed on 18 occasions, Buffon's *Natural History* (again in Smellie's translation) was loaned 27 times, Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, Arnot's *History of Edinburgh* and the *Philosophical Transactions* were each borrowed 13 times, Watson's *Philip II* was borrowed 12 times, and Adam Dickson's *Treatise of Agriculture*, 11. As Anand Chitnis suggests,

Innerpeffray's borrowing register shows the capacity of ordinary people in central, Lowland Scotland of the mid- to late-eighteenth century to support and countenance an intellectual movement in the university towns and cities. If William Robertson, regarded as one of the great European intellectuals of his day, was regularly read by artisans in Perthshire, the intellectual elite of Scotland were not operating in a sphere totally above that of their fellow countrymen.<sup>50</sup>

The picture is still more revealing if we look at borrowing patterns over the next twenty years, summarised in Table 4.5. Buffon and the *Scots Magazine* retain their impressive profile, while Robertson's *America* replaces *Charles V* as the most popular of his historiography – though both continue to feature on nearly every page of the borrowing record.

Much more dramatic, however, is the impression made by Hume's *Essays and Treatises*, borrowed by individuals who included James Bain (cooper in Muthill), James Drummond (flesher in Comrie), James Morison, (tanner in Auchterarder) and Duncan Stalker (schoolmaster in Comrie). Moreover, borrowers of Hume's *Essays* at Innerpeffray registered some very interesting associations. Thomas Taylor of Crieff, for instance, took Hume's *Essays* out with a copy of Descartes, while James Paton complemented Hume with the Newtonian divine Samuel Clarke, as well as the first volume of Lord Monboddo's *Origin and Progress of*

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<sup>49</sup> Kaufman, "Unique Record", 269–71. Compare with Jacob's summary of the borrowing registers of fifteen parish libraries in England, where titles like Wallis's *Infant Baptism*, Tillotson's *Sermons*, Plutarch's *Lives* and Kennet's *Antiquities* were most popular; "Libraries for the Parish", 70–1.

<sup>50</sup> A. C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History* (London, 1976), 19.

Table 4.5. Innerpeffray Library, borrowings of selected titles, 1801–1820

Author, <i>title</i>	Number of borrowers	Number of borrowings
Buffon, <i>Natural History</i>	39	56
Robertson, <i>History of America</i>	25	30
Hume, <i>Essays and Treatises</i>	21	35
Kames, <i>Sketches of the History of Man</i>	18	22
<i>Scots Magazine</i>	18	41
Beattie, <i>Essays</i>	17	21
Ferguson, J., <i>Astronomy</i>	14	17
Ferguson, J., <i>Mechanics</i>	14	16
Reid, <i>Inquiry into the Human Mind</i>	14	20
Robertson, <i>Charles V</i>	14	20
Abercrombie, <i>Martial Achievements</i>	11	15
MacLaurin, <i>Philosophical Discoveries of Newton</i>	11	16
Hume, <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i>	8	8
Watson, <i>Philip II</i>	7	7
Ferguson, A., <i>Essay on the History of Civil Society</i>	5	6

*Language*. In fact, Paton was also one of eight Innerpeffray readers who returned to borrow the *Essays* again, while Peter Nelson of Dalpatrick (perhaps a tenant farmer) borrowed the *Essays* no less than seven times between 1801 and 1820, as well as the library's copy of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. Indeed, the borrowing registers at Innerpeffray actually represent one of the very few pieces of evidence we have that Hume's landmark philosophical treatise made any impact at all on a Scottish readership – even though its presence in the Innerpeffray collection (it was usually excluded from personal and institutional collections, as we have seen) owed everything to the book-collecting instincts of one man, the late Archbishop of York. The *Treatise* was borrowed by eight readers at Innerpeffray, including a surgeon and a schoolmaster, and with two borrowing different volumes in the same week (the surgeon John Alexander and farmer Robert Nelson) it is tempting to imagine readers discussing their experiences of Hume, perhaps sharing their thoughts on this unfamiliar and fundamentally challenging masterpiece of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy.

Though Hume leads the way amongst Scottish philosophers, it is evident from Table 4.5 that his Common Sense opponents also found some favour with Innerpeffray readers. Though Beattie's *Essay on Truth* was one of the most frequently borrowed titles before 1800, Reid had made no impression at all. Yet in this second period, and as at the School Wynd Congregational Library, we witness an explosion in the popularity of Reid's philosophy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As well as ministers like the Edinburgh University-educated Patrick McIsaac (1774–1829) of Comrie, Reid's borrowers – like Hume's – included a smattering of readers from across the social scale (ranging from the solicitor Andrew Barlas, originally of Glasgow, to Peter McLaren, a cart and plough wright from Comrie and James Young, merchant of Crieff). Moreover, Innerpeffray readers were reading across both sides of the philosophical divergence at the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment, in effect negotiating for themselves the range of available responses to Hume's scandalous irreligion outlined in Chapter Eight. Three borrowed Hume, Reid and Beattie, including Peter Nelson and the tanner Morison, and three more complemented Hume with either Reid or Beattie – none of whom were ministers in the Church of Scotland or gentlemen of particular note, giving the lie to the usual presumption that Enlightenment was restricted to a privileged few in provincial Scotland.

Indeed, Innerpeffray also offers evidence to suggest that the popularity of science that helped define elite culture in Britain was shared by some provincial readers. The astonishing frequency with which Buffon, the foremost naturalist of his age, was borrowed over the course of fifty years at Innerpeffray is quite sufficient evidence to substantiate this impression. Another consistent performer was MacLaurin's *Account of Newton*, borrowed seven times before 1800 and sixteen more between 1801 and 1821, which attracted interest across the social spectrum, being loaned to two publicans (James Gow and James Sharp of Crieff), to the distiller John Drummond and to Patrick MacFarlane, a grocer in Comrie. Coupled with the frequency with which Ferguson's *Astronomy Explained upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles* was loaned (borrowed by fourteen individuals in the second period, including both Gow and Drummond), as well as the popularity of Newton's follower Clarke, the borrowing registers at Innerpeffray therefore suggest that Newtonianism – a core component of the Enlightenment

across Europe, of course – was keenly followed in this part of provincial Scotland.

#### IV

Another provincial community whose access to the Scottish Enlightenment was facilitated by the generosity of a benevolent donor was Haddington, East Lothian. Rev. John Gray (1646–1717), preacher, scholar and linguist, gathered one of the finest collections of early printed books in Scotland which he bequeathed to the town of his birth when he died – perhaps inspired by the example of Gilbert Burnet, who had donated books to the Kirkwood Library at nearby Saltoun in 1715.<sup>51</sup> Though Crawford suggests that “consultation rights were [initially] restricted to members of the clergy and borrowing rights to Haddington’s two ministers”,<sup>52</sup> surviving records demonstrate that the Library was functioning according to Gray’s original intentions by 1732, to serve “the community...of the town of Haddington” – apparently free of charge, as at Innerpefferay. Certainly, Haddington’s incumbent ministers were amongst the most prolific borrowers, including Robert Scott (1731–1807) and William Sibbald (1760–1833), but so too were leaders of the lay community – the men, in fact, charged with the management of the library according to the terms of Gray’s mortification. These included Provost William Cunningham (a keen follower of Robertson’s life and works), Bailie Alexander Galloway (who borrowed Ossian and Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*) and the town clerk David Hay Donaldson (apparently a keen student of Scottish history, borrowing Hailes’s *Annals* as well as Buchanan and Pitscottie). But like Innerpefferay, the Gray Library registers also allow us to explore reading preferences further down the social scale, including the nurserymen John Affleck (who borrowed Robertson, Burns and Blair’s *Sermons*) and Peter Dodds

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<sup>51</sup> Aitken, *Public Library Movement*, 3, 7–8; Dunstan, “Glimpses”, 42–59. Owing to the funds Burnet left along with his books, the Saltoun Library was able to acquire a very extensive range of Scottish Enlightenment books by the end of the eighteenth century, including the historical works of Robert Henry, David Hume, William Robertson, Tobias Smollett and Gilbert Stuart, as well as Ferguson’s *Civil Society*, Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, the philosophical works of Thomas Reid and works on taste by Beattie, Blair, Campbell, Kames and Hutcheson; NLS Acc.9270/20. Nevertheless, the library remained for the sole use of the incumbent minister of Saltoun, as aptly reflected in the survival of annotated books from the collection surviving at the NLS.

<sup>52</sup> Crawford, “Origins”, 67.

(apparently an avid fan of Gibbon), the butcher James Nisbet (who took out histories of Scotland by Buchanan and Robertson), the tailor William Dudgeon and the shoemaker John Anderson (who both borrowed Hume's *History*).<sup>53</sup>

As will already be clear, the collection developed sufficiently through the course of the eighteenth century to facilitate readers' encounters with the Scottish Enlightenment. The key to the development of the collection lay in the terms of Gray's original mortification. Although the original collection (around 1,200 volumes) was apparently so specialised that the city fathers had been rather embarrassed by the gift, Gray also left money to support charitable causes and provide for the upkeep of the library.<sup>54</sup> The trustees used the interest from this sum to expand the collection intermittently from the 1740s, reflecting both their own reading priorities and perhaps those of the library's patrons. The collection was never that large – a catalogue compiled in 1828 recorded 1,335 titles, perhaps only 200 more than the original bequest – but the trustees were nevertheless able to accumulate many of the canonical works of the eighteenth century. Surviving minutes confirm the acquisition of such standard texts as the *Modern Universal History*, Rollin's *Ancient History* and *Roman History*, Rapin's *History of England*, Fielding's *Works*, Callendar's *Voyages*, Plutarch's *Lives* and *Nature Delineated*, as well as older Scottish historians like Buchanan, Pitscottie, Abercrombie and Burnet. From 1774, however, the trustees ordered titles associated with the Scottish Enlightenment with increasing frequency, a reflection of their desire to build an exclusive collection of serious, edifying and critically-approved books which would do honour to their community and improve its inhabitants. Robertson's *Charles V* was ordered on 25 May 1774, with Maitland's *History of*

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<sup>53</sup> Kaufman regretted that borrowers did not enter their occupations as a matter of course when borrowing books from the Gray Library: "What we lack in this record at Haddington is light on the social status of the borrowers. All we have are the designations after the names of three ministers, two merchants, an apothecary, one lone wright – and a dancing master"; Kaufman, 267. However, occupations can be gleaned for borrowers across the whole period covered by both registers from the Trustees' Minute Book, held at the NLS Ms 16479, which also details the use of money set aside from Gray's mortification to finance apprenticeships in the town; as well as from the usual biographical sources. See also Dunstan, "Glimpses", 44.

<sup>54</sup> *Gazetteer for Scotland*, accessed online at [www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/people/famousfirst1144.html](http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/people/famousfirst1144.html): "Mr John Gray minister of the gospel at Aberlady, for the regard he had, for the town of Haddingtoun, the place of his nativity, did mortify, this library for the community & also did mortify, the sum of 3,000 merks Scots & appointed the annual rent thereof, to charitable uses agreeable to his will, under Ye management, of Ye Magistrates & Town Clerk thereof."

*Edinburgh* following on 15 March 1776, while Blair's *Sermons* and Hailes's *Annals of Scotland* were both part of the order drawn up on 6 April 1779.<sup>55</sup>

According to the borrowing register, some of these works clearly made an immediate impact on the intellectual horizons of Haddington readers. Though the legibility of borrowers' signatures is a particularly acute problem in this instance, Kaufman established that 2,837 loans were registered between 1732 and 1789. Popular titles included the works of Henry Fielding, travel literature by the likes of Anson, Callendar and Cook, the historiography of Rollin and Rapin and the *Universal History* – as is indicated by Table 4.6. Classics were represented by Gordon's translation of Tacitus, but religious and devotional

Table 4.6. Gray Library loans, 1732–1789 (total loans in period, 2,837)<sup>56</sup>

<i>Universal History</i>	280	Wraxall, <i>Memoirs</i>	48
Rollin, <i>Ancient History</i>	241	Plutarch, <i>Lives</i>	45
Fielding, <i>Works</i>	121	Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i>	42
Callender, <i>Collection of Voyages</i>	91	Anson, <i>Voyage Round the World</i>	42
Sully, <i>Memoirs</i>	87	<i>Nature Delineated</i>	40
Rollin, <i>Roman History</i>	82	Tacitus (tr. Gordon)	38
Robertson, <i>History of Charles V</i>	73	Boswell, <i>Account of Corsica</i>	37
Rapin, <i>History of England</i>	71	Rollin, <i>Study of Belles Lettres</i>	36
Raynal, <i>East and West Indies</i>	65	Walker, <i>Sermons</i>	31
Ludlow, <i>Memoirs</i>	57	De Retz, <i>Memoirs</i>	29
Burnet, <i>History of the Reformation</i>	55	Lindsay, <i>History of Scotland</i>	28
Buchanan, <i>History of Scotland</i>	54	Mosheim, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>	26
Lyttleton, <i>Works</i>	54		

<sup>55</sup> NLS Ms 16479, Minute Book of the Trustees of the Gray Library.

<sup>56</sup> NLS Ms 16480, Book for the Receipts of Books lent out of Mr John Gray's Library [Haddington], 1732–1789. This analysis of the earlier period is based on Kaufman, 265–8 and my own research, though it is important to note Kaufman only took analysis up to 1789. For a more recent summary of general trends, see Dunstan, "Glimpses".



texts failed to register much interest even in the earlier years of regular loans. Even in this early period it is immediately evident that Haddington readers were as enthusiastic about Robertson's historiography as readers in other parts of provincial Scotland. His *History of Scotland* was borrowed 42 times before 1789, while *Charles V* was one of the most frequently borrowed texts over the whole period – despite the fact that it was only acquired in 1774.

Interest in the Scottish Enlightenment at the Gray Library really exploded in the period covered by the second volume of borrowings, 1790–1816.<sup>57</sup> Many books associated with the Scottish Enlightenment were only acquired by the Gray Library for the first time in this second period as the Trustees' mission to enhance the collection progressed with increasing pace. These included Robertson's *History of America*, Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Hume's *History* (all ordered on 15 October 1804), Blair's *Lectures*, Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles* and Stewart's *Life of Robertson* (13 October 1806) and Ferguson's *History of Rome* (17 October 1808).<sup>58</sup> When they were eventually acquired, these books made an immediate and dramatic impression – as demonstrated by Table 4.7.<sup>59</sup> Hume's *History* and Henry's *History* joined Robertson's historiography amongst the most popular titles in this second period as another proof of the widespread appeal of the polite historiography of the Scottish Enlightenment. Hume's borrowers included three Trustees (including Bailie Alexander Matthew, deputy clerk of the sheriff court, who borrowed the *History* on seven occasions and Smollett's *Continuation* four times) and a minister in the United Secession Church (William Hogg, whose loans included Hume three times and Smollett's *Continuation* twice), but also an accountant, a surveyor, a shoemaker and a tailor.

Moreover, the library registers often feature dense clusters of loans of Hume's *History* around the same time – suggesting (as with Hume's *Treatise* at Innerpeffray) that there was an element of sociability in these borrowings, with readers perhaps exchanging comments as they returned one volume to withdraw the next. Hume's *History* was borrowed with some intensity in April and May 1809; magistrates

<sup>57</sup> There is a gap in the borrowing register between 1796 and 1804. Dunstan, "Glimpses", provides an analysis of the general trends by decade, confirming my conclusion that library use was revitalised in this second period.

<sup>58</sup> Gray Minutes.

<sup>59</sup> Based on NLS Ms 16481, Account of Books borrowed from the public Library of the Town of Haddington, from 1 April 1792.

Table 4.7. Gray Library loans, 1790–1816

Author, <i>title</i>	Number of borrowers	Number of borrowings
Burns, <i>Poetic Works</i>	54	93
Robertson, <i>Charles V</i>	49	93
Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i>	37	46
Hume, <i>History</i>	36	101
Robertson, <i>History of America</i>	34	58
Fielding, <i>Works</i>	33	64
Buchanan, <i>History of Scotland</i>	32	36
Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i>	31	96
Scott, <i>Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border</i>	29	48
Hailes, <i>Annals of Scotland</i>	23	28
Blair, <i>Lectures</i>	20	24
Smollett, <i>History of England</i>	19	38
Burnet, <i>History of his Own Times</i>	19	26
Macpherson, <i>Ossian's Works</i>	18	23
Blair, <i>Sermons</i>	17	25

Matthew and Pringle exchanging borrowings with Robert Darling and John Laidlaw Esq., before Alexander Watson and George Irvine started reading Hume in July and August that year. Four more readers borrowed Hume's *History* simultaneously in February 1810, while five withdrew it in March 1811.

Robertson also seems to have attracted dedicated communities of readers, with concentrated loans of *Charles V* in August 1793 and of the *History of America* in March and October 1808. Amongst Haddington's ruling elite, Robertson was borrowed by at least nine magistrates (all Trustees of the Gray Library), including Bailie James Roughead (who borrowed the *History of Scotland* three times), Bailie Alexander Nisbet Jnr. (*Charles V* twice) and Provost William Cunningham (all three major works), as well as two merchant councillors (including William Shiells, a brewer who borrowed *Charles V* twice and *History of America* once, as well as Henry's *History* five times) and three writers (among whom Patrick Dudgeon WS borrowed *Charles V* four times and the *History of America* twice).<sup>60</sup> But Robertson's historiography was

<sup>60</sup> Patrick Dudgeon (1798–1846), *Register of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet* ed. R. K. Will (Edinburgh, 1983).

also quite clearly familiar to readers beyond the council chambers. The baker William Hunter, for instance, borrowed *Charles V* four times and the *History of Scotland* twice, while tanner Andrew Pringle also borrowed *Charles V* four times, as well as the *History of America* once. Less privileged borrowers of Robertson included a wright, a watchmaker, a vintner, a china dealer, a carrier, a flesher, a grocer, at least one ironmonger, two tailors and five schoolmasters (including the Rector of the Haddington Academy William Graham, as well as James Brown, appointed Librarian in 1792). Schoolmaster James Johnston (Librarian from 1806) was one of four borrowers who borrowed each of Robertson's three major histories, though only John Laidlaw Esq. borrowed the *Historical Disquisition on India* as well. Such was the intense interest in Robertson's *America*, finally, that the Trustees ordered a replacement copy in 1809.<sup>61</sup>

Aside from historiography, Blair's *Lectures* stand out, borrowed by twenty different readers (who notably included two schoolmasters), confirming once again the widespread provincial interest in Scottish work on taste – though with limited resources, the Trustees never attempted to acquire less critically acclaimed works on a similar topic by Kames, Campbell or Alison. Once again, Haddington's clergymen showed very little interest in Blair's *Sermons* (alone amongst his colleagues, Sibbald, who had been awarded a D.D. from the University of Edinburgh in 1800 and had contributed an account of Johnstone to the *Statistical Account*,<sup>62</sup> borrowed the *Sermons* twice), with borrowers instead including laymen like the builder John Swinton, the baker William Hunter and the weaver George Baillie.

The second borrowing register from the Gray Library also provides compelling evidence for the enthusiastic reception of imaginative literature. Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* made an immediate impression, loaned to 29 individuals, including six women and a dancing master, as well as three ministers, a cutler, a draper and a grocer. Similarly, Macpherson's *Works of Ossian* were clearly a welcome addition after their donation in 1810,<sup>63</sup> with 18 borrowers including five women, two ironmongers, two ministers and a butcher. However, clearly the most popular once again was Burns, whose *Poems* were actually borrowed by more individuals than any other title.

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<sup>61</sup> Gray Minutes, 22 February 1809.

<sup>62</sup> *Fasti*.

<sup>63</sup> Gray Minutes, 12 March 1810.

Although there were only three women among them, it is likely that many of the men who borrowed Burns – including a bookseller, a china dealer and a watchmaker – choose him for communal family use, or on the explicit request of a female member of the household.

## V

Though the Innerpeffray Library and the Gray Library allowed provincial readers to encounter some of the core texts of the Scottish Enlightenment, they were both partially restricted by the terms of their foundation. An endowed library offering far more extensive holdings was that founded at Dunblane by Robert Leighton (1611–1684), Bishop of Dunblane (1661–1670) and Archbishop of Glasgow (1670–1674). Dismissed by Aitken as “scarcely” a public library at all,<sup>64</sup> the Leightonian Library actually seems to have been a major feature of the cultural landscape, warranting pride of place in the *Statistical Account* of the parish composed by two of its regular clerical patrons.<sup>65</sup> From 31 October 1734, when lending services commenced on a subscription basis, it served a wide hinterland and loaned books with a far greater frequency than the Innerpeffray Library or Gray Library, while the Trustees regularly added new works and attracted new benefactors.<sup>66</sup> A measure of its prestige is that Hay Drummond, Innerpeffray’s benefactor, “matriculated” at the Leightonian Library on 30 August 1740: Dunblane may therefore have provided important inspiration for the growth of Innerpeffray in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

The Leightonian Library was exceptional amongst documented endowed libraries in the rate at which it acquired the canonical works of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>68</sup> *The Wealth of Nations*, Robertson’s *America*, Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Stewart’s *Elements* were all acquired by the Trustees in the year of their publication. The Library

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<sup>64</sup> Aitken, *Public Library Movement*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> OSA, 12: 307–8.

<sup>66</sup> G. Willis, “The Leighton Library, Dunblane: Its History and Contents”, *The Bibliothek*, 10 (1981), 139–57.

<sup>67</sup> University of Stirling Archives, Ms 25, Leighton Library Matriculation Book, 1734–1814.

<sup>68</sup> *A Catalogue of the Leightonian Library, Dunblane* (Edinburgh, 1793); University of Stirling Archives, Ms 24, Catalogue of the Leightonian Library, Dunblane, compiled by Cameron Dinwoodie, 1940; G. Willis, *The Leightonian Library, Dunblane: Catalogue of Manuscripts* (Stirling, 1981).

also held early editions of a number of other contemporary bestsellers, including the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Statistical Account*, Blair's *Sermons*, Gerard's *Essay on Genius* and Ferguson's *Essay*, as well as important early works such as Archibald Campbell's *Essay on the Original of Moral Virtue*, Innes's *Critical Essay* and, like Dumfries and Innerpefferay, Hutcheson's *System*. James Hamilton donated a copy of his *Purgative Medicines*, Samuel Charters sent trustees his collected *Sermons* (though the library already possessed copies of the original 1786 edition and an 1804 reprint) and Henry Mackenzie presented them with his collected works in 1807.

The prestige of the Leightonian Library was once more reflected in the social distribution of its borrowers. We know of at least 320 individuals who frequented the Library between 1734 and around 1826 on payment of the requisite security.<sup>69</sup> Secular borrowers included Francis Stuart, the 9th Earl of Moray (1737–1810), the ex-Jacobite Trustee Sir Hugh Paterson of Bannockburn (1686–1777)<sup>70</sup> and the laird of Aberuchill Castle, near Comrie, Sir James Campbell (a prolific reader of the historiography of Hume and Robertson), as well as representatives of the major landed families of Perthshire and Stirlingshire – such as William Graham of Airth (1730–1790), the Stirling lairds of Kippendavie and Kippenross and the Ramsays of Ochertyre.<sup>71</sup> The Library also had the support of the professional classes of Dunblane and Stirling, with thirteen medical men and at least twelve writers, as well as an architect, a couple of land surveyors and four schoolmasters – not to mention the merchants, manufacturers and farmers who supported libraries across Scotland.

Consequent on the ecclesiastical origins of the library (Bishop Leighton had originally bequeathed his books to the Cathedral of

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<sup>69</sup> Willis argues that the security demanded was originally £3 in 1734, though this would seem rather too high in light of subscription library fees – it is unclear whether the fee represented a permanent subscription or a temporary deposit. The rate for temporary readers was apparently 2s.6d., Willis, "Leighton Library".

<sup>70</sup> A sympathetic pen-portrait of this "kind hearted ... if not worldly wise" Jacobite "cavalier" appears in *Ochertyre*, 185.

<sup>71</sup> My analysis of borrowings from the Leightonian Library is based on NLS Ms 26, Notes of borrowings from the Leightonian Library, 1725–1728, 1746–1748 and 1792–1793; Ms 27, Register of borrowings from Leighton Library, May 1780–1833, and 1840; Ms 29, Notes of borrowings from the library 1812–1828; and Ms 30, Register of borrowings from the library by short term visitors, August 1815–July 1833. Biographical details and insights into the characters of many of these landed members can be found in *Ochertyre*, xxii–xxvi.

Dunblane), the preponderance of religious readers at the Leightonian Library bears comparison with the Dumfries Presbytery Library. With nearly 50 clergymen, 27 students of divinity and 12 “preachers of the Gospel”, the Leightonian Library was clearly run to a large extent for the succour of the religious community – certainly ministers like Patrick Murray (d.1837) of Kilmadock, William Sheriff (d.1832) of St Ninian’s and William Macgregor Stirling (1771–1833) of Port of Menteith were amongst the most prolific borrowers from the library. Even for clergymen who were not such avid readers, the Leightonian Library served the manifold professional commitments of a provincial minister in the Church of Scotland. Some consulted the library’s strong religious holdings, such as Burnet’s *39 Articles*, while others sought out its unusual medical texts – including Murray of Kilmadock, who was one of only three borrowers of Hamilton’s *Purgative Medicines*.

Also noticeable is the ecumenical flavour of the matriculation records, entirely in keeping with the reconciliatory persona of Leighton himself.<sup>72</sup> Prominent Episcopalian borrowers included Hay Drummond and Bishop George Gleig of Stirling, as well as Hugh James Cheyne and Alexander Cruickshank, Episcopal incumbents at Stirling and Alloa respectively.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, Michael Gilfillan, Dunblane’s first secession minister and a leading light in Secession Church disturbances of the 1780s and 1790s,<sup>74</sup> borrowed a huge range of titles – including the historiography of Hume and Robertson, the Common Sense philosophy of Beattie and Reid, Kames’s *Elements*, Hutcheson’s *System*, Ferguson’s *Essay* and *The Wealth of Nations*, as well as such continental *philosophes* as Voltaire and Montesquieu.

The library’s rich collections also attracted specialist scholars from further afield. The noted antiquaries Walter McFarlane of McFarlane and John Callander of Craigforth came in search of the rarities featured in Leighton’s original bequest, while other published authors to consult the collections included William Cairns, Professor of Logic, Rhetoric

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<sup>72</sup> ODNB; D. Allan, “Reconciliation and Retirement in the Restoration Scottish Church: the Neo-Stoicism of Robert Leighton”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 251–78. The ecumenical atmosphere at the Leightonian Library may have influenced the attitudes of lay members. John Ramsay of Ochertyre, for instance, read sermons by Episcopalian and Presbyterian ministers alike, and may have been inspired by rubbing shoulders with men like Bishop Gleig and the Presbyterian minister of Callander, John Robertson, at the library; *Ochertyre*, xix.

<sup>73</sup> D. M. Bertie, *Scottish Episcopal Clergy 1689–2000* (Edinburgh, 2000).

<sup>74</sup> Small, *United Presbyterian Church*.

and *Belles Lettres* at the Belfast Institute, a former Dunblane resident and a minor contributor to Scottish Common Sense philosophy.<sup>75</sup> Daniel MacQueen, minister of Stirling West Kirk between 1740 and 1758, also registered as a borrower at the Leightonian Library, though his critical savaging of Hume's *History* (which proved so popular at the Dumfries Presbytery Library) was probably not facilitated by the Leightonian copy – he certainly did not admit to borrowing it.

Most intriguingly, the library was also frequented by a youthful James Smith (1789–1850).<sup>76</sup> Appointed manager of the vast cotton mill at Deanston at the age of eighteen, Smith's philanthropic restructuring of the mill included a works library for the betterment of the material and moral condition of the workers – perhaps inspired as much by his experience of the Leightonian Library as by examples of other philanthropic industrialists who set up works libraries. Smith's use of the Leightonian Library was highlighted by his borrowing of the *Statistical Account* and county agricultural reports like James Robertson's *Account of Perthshire* at a time when he was developing solutions to the perennial problems of draining and ploughing in Scottish agriculture – particular problems that were highlighted by countless contributors to the *Statistical Account*.<sup>77</sup> In coming to terms with these problems, moreover, it may have helped Smith – still just 21 when he borrowed the *Statistical Account* from Dunblane – that men like Robertson (minister of Callander and author of the *Account of Perthshire*) were fellow matriculands at the Leightonian Library, raising the prospect once again of sociable reading at provincial Scottish libraries.<sup>78</sup>

One final aspect of the distribution of Leightonian Library borrowers that bears notice is the number of temporary readers who are recorded in the matriculation book. This perhaps points to the increased tourism that was beginning to infiltrate provincial Scotland towards the end of the eighteenth century – some taking the waters at Port of Menteith or visiting the mineral springs recently discovered on the

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<sup>75</sup> ODNB. In this regard, the Leightonian Library remained similar to the English cathedral libraries, which were often visited explicitly for their obscure scholarly, medical or scientific holdings – Samuel Johnson, for instance, borrowed Floyer's *Treatise on Asthma* from one such collection; Williams, "Ecclesiastical Libraries".

<sup>76</sup> ODNB.

<sup>77</sup> Conversely, Smith's influence in agricultural and industrial improvement ('Deanstonization') is evident throughout the *New Statistical Account*; ODNB.

<sup>78</sup> Robertson's account of Callander represents one of the most impressive reports in the *Statistical Account*, thoroughly immersed in principles associated with the Scottish Enlightenment; OSA, 11: 574–627.

Cromlix estate, others stopping off on their way north to the savage beauty of the Trossachs.<sup>79</sup> Not only did the library therefore serve a wide hinterland of local readers (encompassing Stirling, Tillicoultry, Alloa and Dollar to the south and east, Comrie to the north and Aberfoyle and Callander to the west), it also registered readers from much further afield – from Glasgow, Dumbarton and Renfrewshire; from Edinburgh, Leith and East Lothian; even from Belfast and London.

To serve these different constituencies successfully, the Leightonian Library was clearly a most flexible collection that meant different things to different people – so an analysis of borrowings, even of the specific titles that interest us here, is not straightforward (see Table 4.8). Of the polite genres that we have already seen dominate both aggregate analyses of catalogue holdings and individual borrowing registers, history retains its position as the most popular with Scottish readers: the ubiquity of Hume's *History* and Robertson's historiography is once again confirmed, but so too is the popularity of authors such as Gillies, Dalrymple, Henry and Watson who are now all but forgotten. Impressive too is the frequency with which Scottish *Belles Lettres* was borrowed from the Leightonian Library with readers looking to these books and to such periodicals as the *Critical Review*, the *Monthly Review* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* for advice on what to read and how to read. Imaginative literature, of course, was another genre which readers at Dunblane embraced with enthusiasm, though the poor performance of some otherwise popular Scottish literary texts is noticeable – especially the works of Henry Mackenzie (never borrowed from the library in our period, in spite of the author's generosity) and James Thomson. Finally, the reception of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* suggests that the cultural and intellectual programme developed in Edinburgh was attractive in this particular hub of provincial Scotland, with the 32 individuals borrowing the *Encyclopaedia* including ministers, writers, surgeons and landed gentlemen – a veritable directory of the most influential stakeholders in provincial culture.

The borrowing records at Dunblane shed further light on the reception of some less well-circulated works in provincial Scotland. With its borrowers including ministers, gentry, medical men, preachers and students, there was interest across the social scale in Nimmo's

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<sup>79</sup> See Willis, "Leighton Library", 143. Robertson played his own part in stimulating tourism in Scotland, the description of its "Romantic Prospects" in his account of Callander parish in the *Statistical Account* described as "an early brochure on the Beauties of the Trossachs" by his modern editor; OSA, 11: xii, xxxvi.



Table 4.8. Leightonian Library, borrowings of selected titles, 1780–1833

Author, title	Number of borrowers	Number of borrowings
Sinclair, <i>Statistical Account</i>	40	55
Hume, <i>History</i>	37	47
<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i>	32	48
Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i>	26	28
Blair, <i>Lectures</i>	25	31
McPherson, <i>Ossian's Works</i>	24	29
Smellie, <i>Philosophy of Natural History</i>	23	29
Kames, <i>Sketches</i>	22	27
Robertson, <i>History of Scotland</i>	22	37
Gillies, <i>History of Ancient Greece</i>	21	24
Henry, <i>History of Great Britain</i>	21	23
Boswell, <i>Life of Johnson</i>	21	22
Reid, <i>Intellectual Powers</i>	20	26
Robertson, <i>Charles V</i>	20	30
Robertson, <i>History of America</i>	20	23
Stewart, <i>Elements</i>	17	17
Ferguson, <i>History of the Roman Republic</i>	17	20
Millar, <i>Origin of Ranks</i>	16	17
Reid, <i>Active Powers</i>	16	18
Arnot, <i>History of Edinburgh</i>	16	18
Smollett, <i>Works</i>	15	17
Reid, <i>Inquiry</i>	15	18
Nimmo, <i>Stirlingshire</i>	15	17
Burns, <i>Poems</i>	14	17
Dalrymple, <i>Memoirs</i>	14	19
<i>Transactions of the Royal Society</i>	14	17
Kames, <i>Elements of Criticism</i>	14	16
Alison, <i>Essays On Taste</i>	14	14
<i>Edinburgh Review</i>	13	15
Beattie, <i>Evidences</i>	13	18
Watson, <i>Philip II</i>	13	16
Hailes, <i>Annals of Scotland</i>	13	13
Campbell, <i>Philosophy of Rhetoric</i>	13	17
Ferguson, <i>Essay</i>	12	12
Scott, <i>Lady of the Lake</i>	12	13
Blair, <i>Sermons</i>	12	16
Campbell, <i>Dissertation on Miracles</i>	12	15
Charters, <i>Sermons</i>	12	13
Hutcheson, <i>System</i>	11	12
Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i>	11	11
Robertson, <i>India</i>	11	11

*Stirlingshire*, for instance, showing the broad local appeal of this typical piece of regional historiography.<sup>80</sup> Interest in local history and antiquities was also reflected in the frequent loaning of Hailes's *Annals of Scotland*, though Lord Kames's less accessible *Essays on British Antiquities* made little impact. Though there was some early interest in Innes's *Critical Essay*, borrowers at Leighton were more keen on the polite historiography of the Enlightenment than the less fashionable histories by Gilbert Burnet, Patrick Abercrombie and especially George Buchanan (borrowed once, by the laird of Kippenross). Similarly, though Principal Campbell's *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History* attracted seven borrowers (including, naturally enough, four ministers and two students in divinity), there was little appetite for historians on either side of the sectarian divide – Crookshanks, McCrie, Calderwood, Spotswood and Keith were all shunned by readers familiar with the ecumenical heritage of the Leightonian Library.

In fact, of far more appeal was the conjectural historiography that had helped define Enlightenment in Scotland, including *The Wealth of Nations*, Ferguson's *Essay*, Kames's *Sketches* and even the more challenging works of John Millar. Indeed, the borrowing registers at Dunblane provide one of the most telling indicators that these keynote works of the Scottish Enlightenment were read extensively in provincial Scotland, though the greater concentration of university-educated readers at Dunblane may account for their popularity there.<sup>81</sup> Millar's *Distinction of Ranks*, for instance, was borrowed by three clergymen (Robert Clason of Logie and Robertson of Callendar, as well as the Burgher minister Michael Gilfillan, who also borrowed Millar's *Historical View*) and at least three local landowners of note (the lairds of Kippendavie, Newton and Aberuchill), but also by a banker, a surveyor, a writer and a surgeon. Meanwhile, Robert Stirling, minister of Dunblane, was one of two individuals to borrow both volumes of *The Wealth of Nations*, while other borrowers included two merchants (Finlayson of Dunblane and John Wright of Stirling) and the farmers Banks of Craighead and Smith of Watston, for each of whom Smith would have provided a vital insight into contemporary economic policy in the United Kingdom – quite apart from his more

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<sup>80</sup> Nimmo was a former member of Dunblane Presbytery; *Fasti*.

<sup>81</sup> As many as 25% of Leightonian borrowers may have attended one of the Scottish universities, compared with less than 10% at the Selkirk Subscription Library.

famous account of the wider processes of political economy through history.<sup>82</sup>

A similar picture emerges for the philosophical works held by the Leightonian Library. Reid's *Essays* again performed well at Dunblane (proving especially popular once again with the secession reader Gilfillan – who borrowed the *Active Powers* twice and the *Intellectual Powers* four times), while the appeal of his Common Sense philosophy was confirmed by the loan of the more difficult *Inquiry* to fifteen borrowers, all of whom were university-educated readers. At least four borrowed all three of Reid's principal philosophical works, two of whom (the parish ministers of Dunblane and Gargunnock) also borrowed Stewart's *Elements*.

Evaluating the reception of Beattie's philosophy at the Leightonian Library is slightly more complex. Only eight individuals appear to have borrowed his *Essay on Truth* (usually "Beattie's Essay", but sometimes simply "On Truth") including two lairds, two ministers and three students of divinity, but six more borrowed the *Essays on Poetry and Music* ("Beattie on poetry and music", occasionally "Beattie Essays") – which, of course, was published as part of the second edition of Beattie's *Essay on Truth*. Whether the total number of borrowers for Beattie's *Essay on Truth* was therefore more like an aggregate of the two (perhaps fifteen), thus putting it on a par with Reid's *Inquiry*, it is impossible to tell from the available evidence. It is clear, however, that Leightonian readers much preferred Scottish Common Sense philosophy to the more insidious sceptical philosophy of David Hume. In fact, the Library did not even own a copy of the *Essays and Treatises* – with the Innerpeffray comparison particularly instructive here. Whereas the Leightonian Trustees chose not to acquire Hume's philosophy (in spite of huge appetite for his *History* there), the *Treatise* and *Essays* were read extensively at the Innerpeffray Library when they were made available by charitable bequest.

The reception of religious works associated with the Scottish Enlightenment at the Leightonian Library makes further interesting reading. Blair's *Sermons* attracted a diverse readership which included a student, two writers, an army captain and a woman, but no ministers (perhaps thanks to its generalist appeal to lay readers), while Charters's

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<sup>82</sup> For a contemporary reader who read *The Wealth of Nations* for information on the Corn Laws, see Allan, "A Reader Writes", 207–33; I discuss Scottish readers' less engaged responses to *The Wealth of Nations* below, Chapter Five.

*Sermons* proved far more amenable to the clergymen of the area – many of whom had served on the Presbytery of Dunblane with him.<sup>83</sup> However, James Fordyce's immensely popular *Sermons to Young Women* made little impact, despite the fact that he too had once served the local community,<sup>84</sup> and nor did George Hill's *Theological Institutes*. Again, none of the library's fully-fledged clerical patrons borrowed Hill's systematisation of Moderate theology – which, together with their collective lack of interest in Blair's *Sermons*, would seem to reflect resounding indifference to the intellectual priorities of the Moderate party on the part of the Presbyteries of Stirling and Dunblane.<sup>85</sup>

Instead, of far more interest to Leightonian readers were religious works that attacked Hume's critique of religious belief head-on. Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles* was borrowed three times by Rev. Murray of Kilmadock alone, and was also withdrawn by the Earl of Moray and Campbell of Aberuchill. Meanwhile, Aberuchill borrowed Beattie's *Evidences of the Christian Religion* three times – along with Rev. Robertson of Callander (four times), the writer Wingate (twice) and the ministers of Gargunnock, Kilmadock and Dunblane. Returning once more to the comparison with Innerpeffray, it would appear that the less socially exclusive institution – quite clearly Innerpeffray – proved the more receptive to the subversive undercurrent of the Scottish Enlightenment represented by David Hume.

Finally, it is evident that the Leightonian Library fostered members' scientific interests. The frequency with which the various volumes of the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* were loaned provides a hint, offering as it did a digest of cutting-edge scientific research – including a paper by one of their own: Christopher Tait on “the Peat-Mosses of Kincardine and Flanders in Perthshire”.<sup>86</sup> But the real clinching factor in this regard is the popularity of Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account* – the most frequently borrowed text in the entire collection. As Deanston must have realised, Sinclair's conviction that contributors should comment on the agriculture and natural history of their parishes meant that the *Statistical Account* actually represented a

<sup>83</sup> Charters was minister of Kincardine in Menteith between 1769 and 1772; *Fasti*.

<sup>84</sup> Fordyce served briefly as minister of Alloa and Tullibody; *Fasti*.

<sup>85</sup> On the narrow support base of the Moderate party, compare Sher, *Church and University* and MacIntosh, *Church and Theology*. For Ramsay's belligerent view of the sentimental style of the Moderates, see *Ochertyre*, 34, 74, 122–3.

<sup>86</sup> *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, iii (1794), 266–79.

statement of how far Scotland still had to go in terms of agricultural improvement – as well as giving accounts of the most successful experiments that had been conducted towards improvement in various parts of the country. For budding improvers, with their minds attuned to the pragmatic programme at the heart of intellectual culture in late-eighteenth-century Britain, the *Statistical Account* thus told them what needed to be done to prepare the land around Dunblane for the modern age.<sup>87</sup>

## VI

Endowed and religious libraries undoubtedly allowed many readers in provincial Scotland to encounter the books of the Scottish Enlightenment. Hume and Robertson were consistently among the most frequently borrowed authors, and there was even an enthusiastic following for Scottish scientists and philosophers – especially so in the case of Thomas Reid and other philosophers of the Common Sense School, whose works enjoyed increasing popularity in the 1810s and 1820s. Their borrowing records also have implications more generally for our impression of reading habits in provincial Scotland. Reading was quite clearly something that transcended the social scale in Georgian Scotland, as has long been suspected. Moreover, butchers, tanners and nurserymen could in the right conditions be as ready recipients of books written by Hume, Robertson, Smith, Reid et al as the writers, ministers, medical men and lairds who are more usually associated with elite culture – leading to a strong suspicion that the consumption of Enlightenment spread far beyond the landowning and professional elites who dominated the production of culture in Scotland.

Reading was also a sociable experience: time and again we glimpse clusters of borrowings of the same title, with the implication that these texts were being consumed socially – readers talked about the relative merits of books, recommending them to others or helping friends, family and associates overcome the intellectual challenges posed by certain authors. No doubt Smith of Deanston, Robertson of Callendar and the other farmers and contributors to the *Statistical Account* who frequented the Leightonian Library constituted a community of readers discussing the origins and progress of agriculture and industry in

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<sup>87</sup> OSA, 12: xvii–xxviii.

the same way that Ridpath and his cronies discussed Hume at the Kelso Subscription Library, working through Smith, Millar, Ferguson et al together towards a shared goal in the improvement of the local economy.<sup>88</sup> Readers at Dunblane, Innerpeffray and Dumfries might eventually have been inspired to indulge their passion for reading and learning still further – by founding book clubs or subscription libraries where they could take acquisition strategies into their own hands, engaging with critical culture in their own right and institutionalising discussions of books and the wider significance of reading.

This only serves to remind us that borrowing records from these five libraries inevitably present a model of consumption that was fundamentally different from associational and commercial libraries. The provenance of books stocked by these libraries was unpredictable, usually founded on old-fashioned collections donated to the community at large. Even philanthropic donations of the high Enlightenment period inevitably reflected a single reader's critical judgement, literary taste and idiosyncratic interests (Henry's bequest to Linlithgow, for instance, or Hay Dummond's to Innerpeffray), while the undoubted ability of such libraries to attract authorial donations did not necessarily supply the kind of books borrowers actually wanted to read – witness the absolute failure of the "Man of Feeling" at Dunblane. At Innerpeffray, Haddington and Dumfries, moreover, the high concentration of student borrowers active alongside their teachers suggests that educational decree accounted for the popularity of certain books rather than personal choice or critical reputation. Such libraries could act as subscription libraries (and sometimes look very much like them in the historical record), but their members had very little ability to participate in stock development. That these philanthropic collections were neither as responsive to readers' choices, nor as dependent on critical culture as other types of library in turn creates some puzzling anomalies in the borrowing patterns. Most significantly, readers at Innerpeffray seem to have been particularly intrigued by a book they would never have encountered at a subscription or circulating library, still less have owned in person, namely David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. Why they were interested in a book that was only known by ill repute

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<sup>88</sup> I have come across only the merest hint of a discussion between Leightonian borrowers in the historical record, in Ramsay of Ochertyre and Bishop Gleig's discussion of the merits of George Campbell's *Four Gospel Translated From the Greek* (1789) in November 1799; *Ochertyre*, 5.

in most parts of contemporary Scotland and that was available to them because it had earlier been owned by one of the leading churchmen in Britain, we simply do not know.

Ultimately, then, library records can only ever give us an impression of reading preferences in the past. The familiar notion that meaning is inscribed in texts does allow us to surmise why certain books were more popular than others, but beyond this supposition such sources leave a great deal left unsaid. As Chartier suggests for the eminently more combustible environment in which reading encounters took place in 1780s France, “the new representations that [Enlightenment books] proposed did not become imprinted on the readers’ minds, and in all cases they were open to varied uses and multiple interpretations”.<sup>89</sup> What did the tanner James Morison make of the many texts he borrowed from the Innerpeffray Library? Was his experience of Hume’s *Essays* or Reid’s *Inquiry* significantly different from the responses of the surgeon John Alexander or the minister Patrick McIsaac? Why did readers like history so much, and did they understand Hume’s strategic treatment of the Glorious Revolution, or Robertson’s sentimental rehabilitation of Mary Queen of Scots? Most importantly, perhaps, given the unprecedented emphasis put on the importance of critical judgement and good taste by Scottish philosophers like Blair, Kames and Beattie (not to mention by the immensely popular critical reviewers), how far were readers influenced by the critics in selecting and evaluating the books they read? For answers to these types of questions, we must turn in Part II to sources that take us to the heart of the reading experience – to individuals’ own reading notes, meticulously taken down in commonplace books or scrawled across the margins of books as they read them.

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<sup>89</sup> R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton NJ, 1987), 85.





## PART TWO

### EXPERIENCING ENLIGHTENMENT



## CHAPTER FIVE

### “THIS MAP OF MY MIND”: RECOVERING HISTORICAL READING EXPERIENCES

In 1762 a manhunt was in progress at the University of St Andrews. Patrick Bower had reported a substantial stash of books stolen from his book shop on South Street and in due deference to town-gown relations a search of the private apartments of all students was authorised by Professor Robert Watson. The 63 volumes were eventually recovered from a locked chest in David Rattray's room, amongst them MacLaurin's *Treatise on Algebra*, Wilkie's *Epigoniad*, Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* and Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, as well as books by Voltaire and Addison.<sup>1</sup> The incident signalled the abrupt end of Rattray's academic career, yet his dubious association with such eminent works actually tells us little about why he selected them and how he responded to them as a reader. Indeed, the key to the chest had earlier been entrusted by Rattray to the university porter for safe-keeping, so Rattray may never have read them. Instead, by keeping them close by him in the locked chest, his behaviour betrays some of the psychological symptoms associated with book theft described by Alberto Manguel:

Physical ownership becomes at times synonymous with a sense of intellectual apprehension. We come to feel that the books we own are the books we know, as if possession were, in libraries as in courts, nine-tenths of the law...; as if their presence alone fills us with their wisdom without our actually having to labour through their contents.<sup>2</sup>

Rattray's scenario illustrates perfectly the point that evidence for the possession of certain books or access to them through lending libraries can never illuminate fully the experience of the individual reader in the past. It is therefore to evidence of private reading experiences that we now turn for an insight into what the books of the Scottish Enlightenment meant to contemporary readers with no specialist interest in its

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<sup>1</sup> SAUL MS LY980/1, Miscellaneous Library Papers (Eighteenth Century), A to I.

<sup>2</sup> A. Manguel, *A History of Reading* (London, 1996), 245.

philosophy, science or history, and no particularly extraordinary intellectual capacity. Bernadette Cunningham observes that “books come to life when they are read. Each reader, each listener to a text being read, responds to it in the light of his or her own prior knowledge and life experience”.<sup>3</sup> By turning to readers’ engagement with the books of Hume, Robertson, Smith et al, we can therefore hope to breathe life into the Scottish Enlightenment – not as it is usually conceived by modern scholars as a check list of leading authors and their ideas, but as a body of literature that was encountered daily by contemporary readers and that informed their most dearly held values and beliefs. Before we can describe this process in more detail, however, we must first assess the ways and means by which historical reading experiences are recoverable.

# I

In introducing *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading* (1997), Robert DeMaria advises that:

Evidence for lives of reading...should not come from the public published statements of writers, but rather, wherever possible, from documentary sources: marginalia, notebooks, commonplace books, diaries, anecdotes, letters and casual, conversational remarks.<sup>4</sup>

Many of these sources are readily familiar and need no particular clarification. Among their many other functions, letters in the Georgian period were often sites for recording reading experiences and discussing books. In 1771, for instance, the teenage Charlotte Murray updated her grown-up brother on communal reading at Blair Castle: “After tea we went to our work as the Duke [of Atholl] began reading a new book to us, Humphrey Clinker, it seems very entertaining so far as we have gone in it”.<sup>5</sup> Though they usually tell us little about the reading experience involved, stray comments like these which litter the Atholl

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<sup>3</sup> B. Cunningham, “Introduction: the Experience of Reading”, in her and M. Kennedy (eds.), *The Experience of Reading: Irish Historical Perspectives* (Dublin, 1999), 2.

<sup>4</sup> DeMaria Jr, *Samuel Johnson*, 2. Rose pioneers a quite different approach in *Intellectual Life*, dependant on working class autobiographies; for Rose’s views on the possibility of an empirical history of reading, see his “How Historians Study Reader Response”; idem., “Rereading the English Common Reader”.

<sup>5</sup> NRAS 234, Box 54/II/148, Charlotte Murray to John Murray; see also boxes 49, 59 and 65.

correspondence support Roger Chartier's contention that "reading aloud while others listened long remained one of the practices that cemented elite sociability".<sup>6</sup> William Macpherson's letters from Edinburgh to his family at Blairgowrie, Perthshire, reveal the role played by reading in preparing young men for their first taste of independent life. Since he was soon to leave Scotland to try his luck as a planter in the West Indies, Macpherson was fixated on contemporary travel writing and had been

a good deal employed in drawing an African view, out of Park's Travels, which I have read and which I think very amusing; I am now reading Bruce's Travels; it is a very large book, in five quarto volumes.<sup>7</sup>

Henry Cockburn's letters are packed with much more acute observations on books and their authors, a marker of the still vibrant intellectual culture that persisted in Edinburgh and the Lothians in the 1790s and early 1800s.<sup>8</sup> Such sources illustrate the sheer ubiquity of books and can add anecdotal colour to investigations of reading experiences, but they are usually too unpredictable in scope and character, and too widely scattered, to provide a basis for systematic study of the meaning of reading.<sup>9</sup>

More useful, perhaps, are those correspondences that link contemporary readers directly to the writing process. In her early 20s, Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock, near Nairn, initiated a life-long correspondence with the celebrated "Man of Feeling", Henry Mackenzie. Not only did it allow Elizabeth to keep track of literary developments in the capital from her rural retreat in the north east, the correspondence also allowed Mackenzie to try out drafts of his work on a friendly audience. "It is by such Criticisms as your Mama's, your Brother's & yours, that I wish my Performances to be judg'd", he wrote early in 1770, enclosing a further passage from his first novel:

I now inclose you the Sequel of Edward's Story, which I hope you will find not inferior to the first Part. When this same Man of Feeling is Publish'd,

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<sup>6</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> NRAS 2614, Bundle 277, William Macpherson to Alan Macpherson, 13 February 1801.

<sup>8</sup> Cockburn's *Letters*; see also A. Bell (ed.), *Lord Cockburn: a Bicentenary Commemoration* (Edinburgh, 1979); H. Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time*, ed. Karl Miller (Chicago and London, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> On the use of correspondence in researching the history of reading, see St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 397–9; and more generally in the eighteenth century, Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 10–1, 61–72, 114–8 and 354–64.

which it may possibly be soon, Kilravock will be one of those Places where it will be read with little Pleasure; because I have been led, from a Desire of entertaining you, to anticipate so much of it.<sup>10</sup>

Rose was evidently an extremely important sounding board for Mackenzie (“You see you are not only Mistress of my Thoughts but have them even in Embryo”,<sup>11</sup> he told her later that year), but he was by no means alone in seeking out willing proof readers in provincial Scotland. Katharine Glover identifies “a specifically gendered role for the Fletcher women [of Saltoun] as arbiters of taste” in reading through (and acting out) early drafts of John Home’s controversial play *Douglas*, while William Robertson wrote tenderly to his cousin, Margaret Hepburn, acknowledging that “Queen Mary has grown up to her present form under your eyes, you have seen her in many different shapes and you have now a right to her”.<sup>12</sup> Such correspondences demonstrate that provincial readers really could engage in the Scottish Enlightenment in extremely direct ways, completing Robert Darnton’s “communications circuit” by demonstrating the influence of reader response on the composition of important books.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, they confirm that the Scottish *literati* were every bit as interested in cultivating provincial audiences as the French *philosophes*, for whom Dena Goodman suggests “the expansion of the Republic of Letters through epistolary exchange was enlightenment itself”.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, they occurred too infrequently – and usually depended too thoroughly on pre-existing kin networks – to contribute much to our analysis of the provincial impact of the Scottish Enlightenment.

## II

Diaries can also be helpful in recovering past reading experiences, not least when they record the books someone actually read in the past. The diaries of Christian Ramsay (née Broun, 1786–1839) list the reading of her adult life, including the works of Robertson, Blair, Stewart, Reid and Burns.<sup>15</sup> A diary started in August 1823 gives us a

<sup>10</sup> *Mackenzie’s Letters*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Glover, “The Female Mind”, 16–9.

<sup>13</sup> Darnton, *Kiss*, 111.

<sup>14</sup> Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, 139.

<sup>15</sup> NRAS 2383, Bundles 60–6, Diaries of Christian Broun, Countess of Dalhousie, 1811–1839; *ODNB*. Compare St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 397–400. For more detail, see

comprehensive insight into the immature reading habits of a Kirkcudbright factor's son, David Campbell. Campbell read Scott, Mackenzie, Thomson and Burns for fun, but also looked over his old logic notes from his days at Glasgow University, prepared for his prospective legal career by reading through the various works of Kames, and perfected his French by working on a translation of Voltaire's *History of Charles XII*.<sup>16</sup>

Diaries allow us to build up a picture of the place of particular books in their compilers' lives and they occasionally give further insights into historical reading practices. Christian Ramsay, for instance, often mentions reading in a sociable context, with books playing a role in her courtship with George Ramsay (1770–1838; the 9th Earl of Dalhousie and governor successively of Nova Scotia and Quebec in the 1810s and 1820s). When they were married, he habitually read Blair's *Sermons* to her on Sundays; they read through Hume's *History of England* together at least twice, while visitors were enjoined to take part in the family's fireside reading.<sup>17</sup> The diaries also provide some fascinating contexts for Christian's encounters with specific books. As she crossed the Atlantic for the first time, she prepared by reading Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, perhaps to equip herself for encounters with the native peoples of North America, and was midway through William Robertson's *History of America* as the couple made landfall at their new home. Sadly, Ramsay never commented on the books she recorded reading in her diaries, and her likely responses to specific texts can only be inferred in the broadest sense from her reputation as an indefatigable botanical collector and Edinburgh hostess.<sup>18</sup> Back in Kirkcudbright, Campbell found Burnet's *History of His Own Times* "amusing" but did not elaborate any further, while he drew attention to an account of the local parish of Minnigaff in an unnamed volume of the *Statistical Account*, but left no trace of what he thought of the

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M. Towsey, "Exporting the Scottish Enlightenment: the Reading Experiences of a Colonial Governor's Wife", in M. Landi (ed.), *L'Ecosse et ses doubles: ancien monde, nouveau monde* (forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> Stewartry Museum, 1996/22/04–07, Diary of David Campbell, Kirkcudbright, August 1823.

<sup>17</sup> Diaries of Christian Broun. On sociable reading practices in the eighteenth century, see Brewer, *Pleasures*, 196; St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 394–5; Tadmor, "In the even my wife read to me"; Woolf, *Reading History*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> ODNB; one commonplace book survives from Christian Broun, consisting in the main of poetic and dramatic transcriptions; NRAS 2383, Bundles 57–8, Extracts from literary works, Christian Broun, 1804.

account, how he used the information it contained and why he highlighted that particular account.<sup>19</sup>

On occasion, however, such sources provide an exceptionally eloquent insight into an individual's reading experiences. This was because, in John Brewer's cogent analysis, diaries enshrined the core values of Addisonian politeness that characterised refined society in the eighteenth century. "To write and read one's own journal was to be a spectator of oneself", Brewer insists, alluding to Addison and Steele's hugely influential *Spectator* magazine; diaries therefore allow us to track personal "efforts to live a richer, better life through appreciation of the arts and imaginative literature".<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most complete Scottish example of this kind – the diary of George Ridpath – mentions by name well over 150 separate titles, many in multiple volumes, some of which were borrowed from the Kelso Subscription Library, others from friends and neighbours, and a few owned by Ridpath himself.<sup>21</sup> Ridpath read many modern editions of the classics, particularly Horace, Plato and Epictetus, as well the older historians of Scotland, George Buchanan, John Knox and writers from both sides of Scotland's religious past. He read political and natural histories of other countries, especially travellers' accounts of the newly-discovered territories and peoples of America. Commensurate with the multifunctional role of a rural clergyman, Ridpath also consulted books on a wide range of subjects in natural philosophy, with a specialist interest in medicine from the twelfth-century *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitano* through to Scottish authors at the cutting edge of modern research, including Home and Whytt.<sup>22</sup> He read some fiction, including *Gulliver's Travels* and *Tristram Shandy*, though not the best-selling works of Fielding and Smollett, and kept himself updated on the latest releases by reading regularly in the foremost literary journals and magazines of the day. Most pertinently, this remarkable record of Ridpath's reading demonstrates that

<sup>19</sup> Diary of David Campbell, entries dated 11 May 1824 and 25 September 1821; cf. OSA, 7: 59–68.

<sup>20</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures*, 108, 110; Allan, *Making British Culture*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ridpath*. Ridpath's reading is discussed in general terms in Balfour Paul's introduction (xi–xv), and individual titles are referenced in his index. Another exceptional diary was compiled by Anna Larpent, summarised in Brewer, *Pleasures*, 194–7, and analysed in more detail in his "Reconstructing the Reader"; on diaries more generally, see S. Colclough, "Recovering the Reader: Commonplace Books and Diaries as Sources of Reading Experiences", *Publishing History*, 44 (1998), 5–37.

<sup>22</sup> Ridpath's medical role is reflected in the excruciating notes he made on a primitive autopsy performed on the corpse of his neighbour, John Hall; *Ridpath*, 111.



he had access to the most recent works of Scottish authors like Robertson and Hume at a time when the Scottish Enlightenment was entering its formative phase.

What really sets Ridpath's journals apart from those compiled by Broun or Campbell is the discursive style in which he commented on many of the books he read, using the process of recording his encounters with books to consolidate his highly perceptive responses to many significant texts – and ultimately to enhance his refinement as a reader and critic. For instance, a hasty diary entry on 29 September 1759 recorded his first encounter with Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which had been lent to him soon after its publication by his neighbouring colleague Matthew Dysart, minister of Eccles. He did not get very far with Smith on this first occasion ("I read a little in evening, but was more inclined to doze"), but returned to it with greater application over the ensuing fortnight. On 11 October, he was finally ready to record his judgement: "The work shows him to be a man of knowledge and of genius too", Ridpath acknowledged, "but yet I can by no means join in the applauses I have heard bestowed on it. What is new in it is perhaps of no great moment in itself, and is neither distinctly explained nor clearly established". In light of the critics' general approval for the work Ridpath revised his reading some days later and "with more attention than before", but remained utterly convinced of his initial conclusion:

His indulging of this humour for playing everywhere the orator, tho' his oratorical talents are far from being extraordinary, has made him spin out to the tedious length of 400 pages what in my opinion might be delivered as fully and with far more energy and perspicuity in 20.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that Ridpath rooted his own precocious criticism of Smith so firmly in the wider framework provided by the professional critical reviews is highly revealing for the way in which eighteenth-century readers learned to read in this interrogative fashion. Periodical journals like the *Annual Register*, the *Scots Magazine* and the *Monthly and Critical Reviews* did not simply help aspiring collectors fill their shelves with approved books; nor did they circulate so widely simply because they helped readers decide which books to borrow from a local lending library. They sought to inform the reading experience

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 276; Originally, it was little more than an expansion of Smith's lectures in ethics; see Smith, *TMS*, xv–xx.

itself, attempting to control “undisciplined or unprincipled desires in reading” by promoting a specific “ideology of reading” that laid the “emphasis on individual judgement”.<sup>24</sup> In common with Enlightenment belletrists and educational writers whose contributions will be discussed later in this chapter, they outlined different levels of reading and encouraged their own readers to aspire to be “good” readers, who would above all be “curious and critical”.

As Frank Donoghue points out, the reviewers’ vision of “the ideal reader” was “always uncomfortably reflexive: taste is an aesthetic judgement that is passed on one’s ability to make aesthetic judgements”.<sup>25</sup> But this reflexivity explains precisely why readers like Ridpath were so keen to cast themselves in the reviewers’ own image: by seeking to evaluate the books they read, aspiring readers throughout the English-speaking world were identifying themselves as readers of good taste. Ridpath even cast critical judgement on the Reviews themselves:

Got in the evening from Sir Robert [Pringle, 3rd baronet of Stichel] by Nancy [Ridpath’s sister] a number of the *Critical Review* which I saw there the other night. Read most of it. I see it is contrived to please the Tories and High Church in political articles and other things, though, perhaps, there is more vivacity and even a greater show of learning than in the *Monthly Review*; yet a satirical spirit seems to be much more intemperately indulged. Nor is the writing in general so correct, so that, as far as I can judge from this specimen, I think the *Monthly Magazine* [ie the *Monthly Review*] much preferable.<sup>26</sup>

The diary in which these polished reports of Ridpath’s reading experiences were entered was only one part of a strikingly self-conscious process of chronicling, evaluating and assimilating his reading experiences – reflecting further his eagerness to prove himself the reviewers’ ideal reader, both “candid and judicious”.<sup>27</sup> Ridpath did not simply skim the contents of books he read, as might be implied by modern claims for the extensive reading habits of eighteenth-century readers.<sup>28</sup> Instead, Ridpath took great care to assess the books he read critically, both in

<sup>24</sup> *Critical Review*, cited in Donoghue, *Fame Machine*, 40, 19, 25, 28.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ridpath*, 239; for the political outlook of the two leading journals, see Roper, *Reviewing*, 174–8.

<sup>27</sup> *Critical Review*, cited in Donoghue, *Fame Machine*, 42.

<sup>28</sup> I refer here to Engelsing’s notion of a “reading revolution” in the eighteenth century, originally expounded in R. Engelsing, “Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit: Das statistische Ausmass und die soziokulturelle Bedeutung der Lektüre”, *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 10 (1970): 945–1002; *idem.*, *Der Bürger als Leser: Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500–1800* (Stuttgart, 1974); see below, Conclusion.

style and content, often revising his initial impressions of a particular book with further re-readings, and complementing certain books with others on the same subject to aid his comprehension of the arguments of the text and to gauge its place in the wider literature on a subject.<sup>29</sup> He entered material that he considered most thought-provoking into a series of commonplace books and occasionally annotated the books themselves when he was particularly struck by passages he had read – or offended by typographical or factual errors he came across. Though no examples are known to survive (we know about them solely through references to them in the diary), such specialist reading notes clearly functioned as an important guide and explanatory tool for his ongoing reading.

Diaries therefore help to contextualise historical reading, fleshing out the evidence of reading habits provided by catalogues and borrowing records. At their most expansive, they could also operate as a specifically self-fashioning genre influenced by the cult of Addisonian politeness, by the rise of the novel and by the emergence of critical reading in the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> In these instances, as Ridpath's diary demonstrates, they can ultimately reveal a great deal about the meanings assigned to books in the past, illuminating how reading contributed directly to the formation and consolidation of personal identities. In this, they were closely related to two specialist reading practices with deep intellectual roots and whose survival allows us to construct a history of reading experiences more systematically: marginalia and commonplace books.

### III

Marginalia are “a contested goldmine”, argues Heather Jackson, the leading pioneer of their use in the history of reading:

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Engelsing's thesis is assessed by Darnton, “First Steps”, 12; R. Wittmann, “Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?”, in G. Cavallo, and R. Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West* (1995; trans., L. G. Cochrane, Cambridge, 1999); DeMaria, “Samuel Johnson and the Reading Revolution”, 86–102.

<sup>29</sup> The reading practices of Sir William Drake reflected similar features; Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> For the links between polite self-fashioning, literary criticism and the novel, see especially P. M. Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA, 1976); E. Gardiner, *Regulating Readers: Gender and Literary Criticism in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Newark and London, 1999).

Common assumptions about marginalia that they are spontaneous, impulsive, uninhibited, that they offer direct access to the reader's mind, fail to take into account inherent complexities of motivation and historical circumstance.<sup>31</sup>

If a book was likely to be read by more than one individual, as we have seen was commonly the case in the eighteenth century, we have to consider whether marginalia should be considered as a kind of semi-public performance, with a reader playing up to his or her anticipated audience.<sup>32</sup> Even when we can be sure that one individual is responsible for the annotations on the pages of a book, we should bear in mind that "it takes time to read a book" and that changing moods might account for the differing frequency or tone of his or her annotations.<sup>33</sup>

Marginalia take on a myriad of forms, ranging from simple marks of ownership through intermittent glossaries squeezed into the spaces between lines of text to full-blown critical essays spilling over marginal spaces onto end and title pages. Most commonly, annotations simply take the form of inscriptions of ownership. Nearly every book in the library at Brodie Castle still holds the book plate and manuscript inscription of James Brodie of Brodie, while William Urquhart's signature appears on the title pages of many books in the collection surviving at Craigston Castle.<sup>34</sup> Although such inscriptions tell us nothing whatsoever about the experience of reading in the past, they can often constitute the only evidence we have that a particular individual was interested in books – as in the case of Cuthbert Gordon, a pioneering industrial chemist from Banffshire, who signed his copy of *Fingal* in 1766.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers writing in Books* (New Haven CT and London, 2001), 6, 99. Such conclusions are reflected in the growing number of studies that have reconstructed the essentially pedagogical roots of annotative practices in the Renaissance; see especially A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship. Vol. 1: Textual Criticism Exegesis* (Oxford, 1983); idem., "Marginal Enterprise", 139–57; Grafton and Jardine, "Studied for Action", 30–78; Sherman, *John Dee*.

<sup>32</sup> Jackson, *Marginalia*, 71–2, 84–5; Jackson argues that sociable annotations were actually particularly prevalent in the eighteenth century, 54–72; on the "addressee" more generally, see 82–100.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 97; for an example, see 248.

<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to the National Trust of Scotland (Brodie Castle) and to Mr William Pratesi Urquhart (Craigston Castle, near Turriff) for permission to raid the shelves of their libraries, and for allowing me to quote from marginalia in books in their possession. On ownership inscriptions, see Jackson, *Marginalia*, 19; D. Pearson, *Provenance Research in Book History: A Handbook* (London, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> NLS Dry.656(1) James Macpherson, *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem* (London, 1762). For Gordon's contribution to the textile industry, see ODNB.

Other simple annotations record details of the acquisition of the book, the date it was read or given as a gift. An annotation on the title page of the Craigston copy of Hume's *History* confirms that "M.U. read this book in 1815 in the 43rd year of her age", presenting yet more evidence for the enthusiastic reception of this text in Scotland in the Georgian period.<sup>36</sup> George Grindlay, an Edinburgh merchant who in 1801 bequeathed his small but eminently enlightened library to the Royal High School, Edinburgh, also inscribed Hume's *History of England*, as well as books by Smith, Robertson, James Boswell and Lord Kames. In the case of William Nimmo's *General History of Stirlingshire*, however, he added a brief note that reflects the importance of the second hand book market to moderately affluent consumers, having acquired this rare title on "30 April 1788 bo<sup>t</sup> at auction in And. Bank Close 1/6".<sup>37</sup> An inscription in a copy of Robertson's *Historical Disquisition on India* surviving at Delgatie Castle, meanwhile, reflects another common way in which the books of the Scottish Enlightenment made their way into the hands of readers. Fittingly given Robertson's status as the academic president of the Scottish Enlightenment (as Principal of Edinburgh University), it had been given "To Douglas Ainslie as a reward for part good conduct and an encouragement to future perseverance and study".<sup>38</sup>

Some annotations on the front matter of books go further, enhancing a reader's engagement with a text. Where a book had been published anonymously, readers frequently added the name of the author if it was known to them. Both Urquhart and Brodie added the name of

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<sup>36</sup> Craigston Castle F3, David Hume, *The History of England under the House of Tudor...* (London, 1759), inside cover. "M.U." may have been the second wife of William Urquhart of Craigston and Cromarty (d.1796), originally Margaret Ogilvie of Auchiries, though they also had a daughter called Mary. There is a family tree in H. Gordon Slade, Aberdeenshire, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 108 (1976–7), 262–99. I have also benefited on this point from conversations with the current librarian at Craigston, Sandra Cumming.

<sup>37</sup> NLS Grindlay.310, William Nimmo, *General History of Stirlingshire* (Edinburgh, 1777); other books inscribed by Grindlay are also part of the NLS Grindlay Collection.

<sup>38</sup> Delgatie Castle, William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India* (London, 1791), inside front cover. My thanks to Mrs Joan Johnson for allowing my access to the books at Delgatie Castle. Douglas Ainslie may have been a son of Burns's friend Robert Ainslie (1766–1838), a writer to the signet; his brother was Sir Whitelaw Ainslie (1767–1837), who spent twenty years in India as a surgeon; see *ODNB*.

Lord Kames to books he had published anonymously.<sup>39</sup> Urquhart also speculated that a volume of *Letters on Mr Hume's History of Great Britain* was "suposed [sic] to be wrote by the Revd. Dr. MacQueen of Edinr.," and identified the author of *Some Thoughts Concerning Religion, Natural and Revealed* (Edinburgh, 1753) as "Duncan Forbes of Culloden Late President of the Session" – correctly in each instance.<sup>40</sup> A member of the Plummer family of Middlestead, who subscribed to the Selkirk Subscription Library for many years despite owning an impressive country house library of their own, added a manuscript list of "Names of the Authors of the Mirror" to their bound collection of Mackenzie's short-lived periodical of 1779–1780, duly acknowledging the collaborative scope of one of the most distinctive literary productions of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>41</sup>

Readers sometimes customised the introductory material of a book in other ways, perhaps contextualising an author's dedication (Urquhart elaborated on the dedication to Lord Deskford in John Ogilvie's *Poems on Several Subjects* (1762)), or adapting a table of contents to help navigate through the work (Urquhart added a manuscript index to a collection of *Discourses on Government* by the renowned republican Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun).<sup>42</sup> Readers did not have to write anything to remake books in this way. Episcopal Bishop of Moray, Alexander Jolly (1756–1838), detached the printed Table of Contents from William Crookshank's rabidly Presbyterian *History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1749) before he had his copy bound. By using it as an *ad hoc* bookmark, he was more easily able to work through the tightly packed text of a book whose traditionally sectarian intent he may have intended to refute with some urgency.<sup>43</sup> Jolly also sometimes

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<sup>39</sup> Craigston Castle, J1, [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Historical Law-Tracts* (Edinburgh, 1761); K4, [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Essays upon Several Subjects concerning British Antiquities* (Edinburgh, 1748). On Kames's anonymity, see Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 151, 153.

<sup>40</sup> Craigston Castle, F4, [Daniel MacQueen], *Letters on Mr Hume's History of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1756); [no classmark] Duncan Forbes, *Some Thoughts Concerning Religion, Natural and Revealed, and the Manner of Understanding Revelation* (London, 1735).

<sup>41</sup> NLS Sund.27, *The Mirror* (1781?).

<sup>42</sup> Craigston Castle, E5, John Ogilvie, *Poems on Several Subjects, to which is prefixed an essay on the Lyric Poetry of the Ancients; in Two letters inscribed to the Right Honourable James Lord Deskfoord* (London, 1762); E6, Andrew Fletcher, *A Discourse of Government with Relation to Militias* (Edinburgh, 1755). On manuscript lists of contents and indexes, see Jackson, *Marginalia*, 25, 37–8, 40.

<sup>43</sup> NLS Jolly.408–9, William Crookshank, *The History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1771); ODNB.

compiled manuscript indexes of his marginal notes in books, appending these to the printed Table of Contents to facilitate his subsequent rereading of books like David Fordyce's posthumous *Theodorus: A Dialogue Concerning the Art of Preaching* (1752).<sup>44</sup>

More dramatically, readers often added manuscript material culled from other textual sources to further personalise the front matter of books they read. Mackenzie's cousin and favoured correspondent, Elizabeth Rose, copied extracts onto the inside front cover of her copy of Elizabeth Hamilton's *Cottagers of Glenburnie* in around 1808 reflecting on its depiction of Highland life. The first, taken from the *Annual Register*, provides yet more compelling evidence for the role of the critical reviewers in shaping contemporary reading experiences:

Miss Hamilton has undertaken the most Delicate & unthankful of all Tasks, that of telling her Friends their Faults. The inhabitant of a Poor & Mountainous Country is proverbially acknowledged to be more attached to the Soil which gave them Birth than he is whose destiny is cast on smiling Plains & among richer Regions.<sup>45</sup>

Very few of the Kilravock books have yet been traced, so it is impossible to confirm whether Elizabeth habitually personalised her books in this way.<sup>46</sup> We know that Bishop Jolly nearly always did, adding manuscript material transcribed from a vast array of textual sources that contextualised each book in a number of ways. In his copy of William Tytler's *Historical and Critical Enquiry into the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots*, for instance, Jolly not only added biographical accounts of the author's life, interests and personality taken from James Anderson's periodical *The Bee, or Literary Intelligence*, he also pasted notes on front and end pages that related exactly how Tytler's book contributed to one of the foremost historical controversies of the age.<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere, his manuscript remaking of books tended to enhance his engagement with important concepts, such as the passages from Dugald

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<sup>44</sup> NLS Jolly.2184, David Fordyce, *Theodorus: a Dialogue concerning the art of preaching* (London, 1752).

<sup>45</sup> Houghton Library, Harvard University, \*EC8 H1803 808c, Elizabeth Hamilton, *Cottagers of Glenburnie; A Tale for the Farmer's Ingle-Nook* (Edinburgh and London, 1808), inside front cover.

<sup>46</sup> For another example of Elizabeth Rose's marginalia, see BL C.142.b.13, Mary Robinson, *Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (London, 1799); transcript available online at <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/robinson.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> NLS Jolly.2644, William Tytler, *An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots* (Edinburgh, 1767).

Stewart's *Philosophical Essays* "On the Sublime" that he copied into the blank pages of Alison's *Essays on Taste*.<sup>48</sup>

Manuscript additions to the main body of texts (literally 'marginalia' when inserted in the margins of pages)<sup>49</sup> also take a wide variety of forms, often simply correcting typographical or factual mistakes in a text. In a particularly splenetic journal entry, Ridpath admitted mutilating Kelso's copy of Thomas Stanley's standard *History of Philosophy*:

Corrected many gross typographical errors, though many no doubt still remain. Never was there a good book so horribly mangled in the printing... This is an infinite pity, and what Millar [the publisher] deserves to be whipt for, that Stanley should be printed so incorrectly.<sup>50</sup>

Ridpath later added dates to the margins of Guthrie's *History of Scotland* which he thought "it was silly of the printer to neglect";<sup>51</sup> while James Brodie (aptly demonstrating that such annotations often arose from information privy to the reader) made a range of minor corrections to Shaw's *History of Moray* pertaining directly to his own family's history.<sup>52</sup> Although not strictly corrections, a series of minor annotations in a copy of Arnot's *History of Edinburgh* that originally belonged to the Fletcher family of Saltoun (and that may later have been transferred to the Saltoun Presbytery Library, for the exclusive use of the parish minister) displays close personal knowledge of the places being described. Indeed, some notes seem perfectly designed to enhance Arnot's usability as a guide to Edinburgh tourist attractions, not least the Palace of Holyrood:

The two portraits of John D. of Lauderdale & his celebrated spouse – perhaps the most dissolute, yet talented couple of their time in Scotland are placed in the deep embrasure of the north window – also longer portraits of the 2 celebrated royal mistresses, Jane Shore & Moll Davies are also shown – the vulgar opinion makes this last one Nell Gwinn – but this is not the case, Nell being fair haired.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> NLS Jolly.2722–3, Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Edinburgh, 1811); compare Dugald Stewart, *Philosophical Essays* (Edinburgh, 1810), 359.

<sup>49</sup> The term 'marginalia' was apparently coined by Coleridge; Jackson, *Marginalia*, 7–8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ridpath*, 40, 35; Thomas Stanley, *The History of Philosophy* (4th edn; London, 1743), published by Andrew Millar.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>52</sup> Brodie Castle, [no classmark], Lachlan Shaw, *The History of the Province of Moray* (Edinburgh, 1775), e.g. 107, 109 and 114.

<sup>53</sup> NLS Saltoun.89, Hugo Arnot, *History of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1779), 308.



Readers also created marginalia as intellectual aids, simplifying or summarising the text to more easily digest its key themes. In this sense, the Newhailes copy of Hume's *History of Great Britain* is a particularly effective example. The book had probably originally belonged to the Enlightenment historian and judge, Lord Hailes, but the annotations clearly date to the 1820s by which time he was long dead and his heir, the spinster Christian Dalrymple, was already in her own old age. Whoever was responsible for them (and a young reader intent on self-education seems likely), many of the Newhailes annotations consist merely of subheadings in the margin which, by imitating the standard practice of printed histories, must have allowed the reader to navigate his or her own particular version of this well-known text so much the better.<sup>54</sup> Occasionally, there are cross-references to other parts of Hume's original, or, still more intriguingly, apparent references to other Enlightenment histories – as when a note on James I's relations with France seemingly alludes to Robertson's celebrated account of the rivalry of two sixteenth-century monarchs, recalling

the conduct of Francis the 1st towards Charles 5th but I fear that the then sovereign of “that generous people” would not have worthily represented the nation whom he governed had the case between him & his rival perhaps been reversed.<sup>55</sup>

Most importantly, however, the Newhailes reader also ventured his or her own marginal commentaries on Hume's original. Always sticking closely to the theme of the text under consideration, such marginal commentaries developed a particular narrative of English constitutional history of which Hume would happily have approved. In this example, our annotator comments on James I's hopelessly inconsistent treatment of Parliament:

This is one of the strongest instances of the want of judgement in James [I] with which history furnished us. He asserts unbounded prerogative, to which he knows the nation to be opposed, becomes violent beyond all bounds when his pretensions are resisted, but no sooner is his anger appeased, than without any concession on the part of the commons, he makes, offers & evinces humility to an extent which they had never either expected or desired.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> NLS Nha.A75, David Hume, *The History of Great Britain. Vol.I. Containing the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (Edinburgh, 1754), e.g. 16.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, 244.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

As well as facilitating easy re-reading, marginalia of this kind were “particularly well-calculated for minute criticism and ‘close’ reading”,<sup>57</sup> allowing readers to engage with a text on the most intimate – and sometimes on the most belligerent – of terms. John Robison’s marginalia in Reid’s *Essays* usually took the form of extended critical essays squeezed into the empty spaces at the side and the bottom of pages, in which Robison agreed with his friend’s philosophical views and occasionally took issue with him over important details. The marginalia suggest that “reading Reid’s works for Robison was akin to a conversation or debate about major themes in metaphysics and moral philosophy”.<sup>58</sup> The same might be said of Alexander Fraser Tytler, a serial annotator of all kinds of books. Extensive annotations in Wodrow’s *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721–2) and Goodall’s *Examinations of the Letters of Mary Queen of Scots* (1754) clearly represented preparatory research towards Tytler’s own historical compositions,<sup>59</sup> but others were far more personal – including a series of caustic notes in his copy of Hume’s *Essays and Treatises* which fit neatly into the pejorative reception of Hume’s works explored in Chapter Eight.<sup>60</sup>

However, it is rare indeed to come across such coherent marginalia. More common are annotations that consist simply of a series of incoherent symbols: the dashes, crosses, arrows, ticks, exclamation marks and underlinings that many of us still use today to help shape our reading of books, with no explicit elaboration of their meaning.<sup>61</sup> A sequence of underlinings emphasise parts of the preface to another copy of

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<sup>57</sup> Jackson, *Marginalia*, 28, quote on 42.

<sup>58</sup> P. Wood, “Marginalia on the Mind: John Robison and Thomas Reid”, in P. Wood (ed.) *The Culture of the Book in the Scottish Enlightenment: An Exhibition* (Toronto, 2000), 116. He reprints pages from Robison’s annotated copies of Reid on 114–5; the originals are located at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

<sup>59</sup> Similar motivations explain David Macpherson’s marginalia in a copy of Innes’s *Critical Essay*, clearly intended as preparatory research towards his *Geographical Illustrations of Scottish History* (1796); EUL La.III.652, Thomas Innes, *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain, or Scotland* (London, 1729).

<sup>60</sup> Tytler’s copies of Wodrow and Goodall are now at the Beinecke; his copy of Hume’s *Essays and Treatises* is held in a private collection. Lord Hailes’s copy of Goodall’s *Examinations* also bears extensive and belligerent marginalia, held at NLS Nha.V71–2.

<sup>61</sup> Jackson, *Marginalia*, 14, 28–9; Roger Stoddard, *Marks in Books* (Cambridge MA, 1985).

Tytler's *Enquiry*, held this time in the National Library of Scotland's Roseberry Collection, but the lack of accompanying commentary means that we cannot tell whether they reflect endorsement or disagreement with this inherently controversial text.<sup>62</sup> A series of vertical, diagonal and horizontal dashes adorn certain parts of the Craigston Castle copy of Hume's *History*,<sup>63</sup> yet only one of these is accompanied with coherent commentary – the execrable outburst “+ Good Riddance, of Bad Rubbish” alongside the death of Mary Tudor, presumably reflecting little more than the Urquharts' implacable opposition to the Queen's Catholic faith.<sup>64</sup> No such easy explanation is apparent for the list of page numbers scrawled on the title page of the Craigston copy of Kames's *Sketches* alongside a contextual reference to another major Scottish work (“p.116, 241, 281 Ossian, 343, 380X, 434”), nor for the various passages that a reader has underlined and accompanied by “!” and “+” signs scattered through the text.<sup>65</sup>

The Urquharts of Craigston Castle actually turn out to have been avid annotators of their books, but the marks they made are largely unintelligible. A series of manuscript sketches adorn the pages of their copy of Hume's *History of England under the Tudors*: a chest (with dimensions), a horse and cart, a man with a hat and walking stick, and an “English gallant” stabbing a “Spaniard” in a sword fight.<sup>66</sup> The last may be easily enough related to Hume's account of the Armada, but it is impossible to say what these sketches reveal about the Urquharts' reading of Hume – why they annotated Hume in this way, what they thought of him, or who in the family was the doodler. Even so, history books seem to have been particularly attractive to serial doodlers.

<sup>62</sup> Ry IV.e.16, William Tytler, *An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence Against Mary Queen of Scots. And an Examination of the Histories of Dr Robertson and Mr Hume, with Respect to that Evidence* (2nd edn; Edinburgh, 1767).

<sup>63</sup> Jackson suggests that such marks were used by readers “to show that these passages were later to be copied out into their commonplace books”, *Marginalia*, 184; the same point is made in relation to Drake's reading by Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 277. Similar anonymous marks can be found in a 1742 copy of Hume's *Essays* held at GUL RB3843, and Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, copy at GUL RB2942–4.

<sup>64</sup> Craigston Castle F3, Hume, *History of England*, 400; for other examples, see 7, 165, 327, 714–5.

<sup>65</sup> Craigston Castle, K1, [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh, 1774), inside front cover, 355 and 426.

<sup>66</sup> Craigston Castle F3, Hume, *History of England*, 433 and 703. These are by no means extra-illustrations of the sophisticated kind discussed by Jackson, *Marginalia*, 185–96.

Grindlay's copy of William Robertson's *Charles V* carries a number of militaristic doodles, including a Greco-Roman soldier sketched alongside the marginal interjections "I am a impero" and "bravo, bravissimo".<sup>67</sup> Here the culprits were most likely pupils at the Royal High School (which, it will be remembered, inherited Grindlay's library), but although the marginalia (we might rather say graffiti in this instance) may reflect their imaginative engagement with the historical subject before them, it says very little about their response to the Scottish Enlightenment.

At least the notes made in a copy of Blair's *Sermons* at Delgatie Castle, Aberdeenshire, record a reader's positive experience, with marginal initials "G", "VG", "Exc" alongside specific passages highlighted by curly brackets "{}" evidently standing for "Good", "Very Good" and "Excellent".<sup>68</sup> However, without knowing who ticked off each sermon with the child-like annotation "Have Read", it is impossible to use the annotations to understand why Blair was so popular with contemporary readers.<sup>69</sup> Deriving usable evidence from marginalia is actually a remarkably frustrating process. Most readers do not leave keys to enable historians to break their coded marks in books and we commonly know neither who annotated nor when.<sup>70</sup> Most importantly, marginalia too often exist isolated from other evidence of an individual's wider reading experiences. Where such knowledge is lacking – as in the Delgatie copy of Blair's *Sermons* – marginal annotations can contribute very little to a systematic analysis of reading experiences.<sup>71</sup>

Quite apart from these methodological problems, the historian is also faced with many more practical difficulties in locating and interpreting marginalia.<sup>72</sup> The attrition rate for such sources is exceptionally high, with very few Georgian examples uncovered in British research

<sup>67</sup> NLS Grindlay.306–8, William Robertson, *History of the Reign of Charles V* (2nd edn; London, 1772), 2: 258, 3: 127.

<sup>68</sup> Delgatie Castle, [no classmark] Hugh Blair, *Sermons*, vol 3 (9th edn; London, 1795), 196, 203, 209, 310, 312, 313, 329, 331, 336–9.

<sup>69</sup> On the popularity of Blair in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 270–3; R. M. Schmitz, *Hugh Blair* (New York, 1968).

<sup>70</sup> Rev. James Gambier of Langley in Kent left one such key; Allan, *Making British Culture*, 112–3; Jackson, *Marginalia*, 28–9.

<sup>71</sup> Jackson argues that they "have to be addressed case by case, with as much knowledge of the historical and personal context as we can muster", *Marginalia*, 43; Allan, "Some Notes and Problems", 108–10.

<sup>72</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the issues outlined in this paragraph, see Pearson, *Provenance Research*, 5–9.

libraries to date.<sup>73</sup> New owners of old books tended to regard previous markings as imperfections – cutting out marks of ownership which no longer apply, recropping pages and erasing pencil jottings.<sup>74</sup> The Saltoun copy of Arnot's *History of Edinburgh*, for instance, carries a note in pencil that seems at one time to have taken issue with the author's over-reliance on Robertson's characterisation of Mary of Guise; but a later owner attempted to erase the annotation, so this potentially fascinating insight into the inter-textual reading of the Scottish Enlightenment is now largely illegible.<sup>75</sup> The books themselves tend to be fragile. A heavily used volume that has been marked up by its owner(s) is simply much less likely to have survived intact, and marginalia in books are as subject to the vagaries of time as the books themselves – including accidental damage by fire or water. Not everyone annotated books in the past: most surviving books have no marginalia even when they do bear inscriptions of ownership,<sup>76</sup> and there were many kinds of books for which marginal annotations were outlawed.<sup>77</sup> Finally, and despite encouraging signs of progress, locating surviving marginalia is problematic, since they only tend to be catalogued in modern research libraries when they represent authorial corrections or can be associated with famous readers.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> See, for instance, the number of eighteenth-century annotations listed in R. C. Alston, *Books with Manuscript: A Short-Title Catalogue of Books with Manuscript Notes in the British Library...* (London, 1994).

<sup>74</sup> On the medium in which annotations were made, Jackson, *Marginalia*, 43.

<sup>75</sup> NLS Saltoun.89, Hugo Arnot, *The History of Edinburgh* ([Edinburgh], 1779), 18.

<sup>76</sup> The ratio between books with ownership inscriptions and those with annotations in the Craigston Castle Library is greater than 10:1. At Brodie Castle, Shaw's *History of Moray* was the only text bearing the inscription of James Brodie of Brodie that was found to contain marginalia.

<sup>77</sup> On resistance to marginalia, see Jackson, *Marginalia*, 74, 234–44, especially 236. Subscription libraries, circulating libraries, book clubs and other types of library specifically banned members from writing in library books. Members of the Arbroath Subscription Library agreed on 24 August 1797, "Rule 19: That no subscriber shall write either upon the margin or blank leaves of any book, and if he injure it more than may be reasonably allowed for a fair reading, he shall pay such sum as the managers shall judge adequate to the damage and shall be prohibited the use of the library till the same is paid"; Angus Archives, MS451/1, Minute Book.

<sup>78</sup> On locating marginalia, see Jackson, *Marginalia*, 9–10; Allan, "Some Notes and Problems", 106, who stresses "a generous measure of good fortune"; for two eminent exceptions, see Alston, *Books with Manuscript*; H. R. Luard, *Catalogue of Adversaria and Printed Books Containing MS. Notes, Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1864). For famous marginalia, see G. Whalley and H. J. Jackson (eds.), *Marginalia*, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols (Princeton NJ, 1980–); E. Merritt (ed.), *Piozzi Marginalia: Comprising Some Extracts from Manuscripts of Hester Lynch Piozzi and Annotations from Her Books* (Cambridge

## IV

Given these problems, it is perhaps not surprising that marginalia have only recently begun to feature in scholarship on the history of reading in the eighteenth century.<sup>79</sup> The continuing neglect of commonplace books is less easily understood. A commonplace book was on its most basic level a blank book into which passages were transcribed from books and other thoughts, remarks, anecdotes and occurrences recorded. They existed primarily to record their owner's reading, acting as a filing system not only for the contents of books they had read but also, commonly, for comments on their reading experiences. As such, according to one commentator, commonplace books represent "the finest available evidence of Georgian reading experiences", yet "not a single coherent monograph appraisal of the commonplace book in Enlightenment cultural history exists".<sup>80</sup>

Commonplace books developed during the Renaissance from the classical tradition of collecting rhetorical *sententiae*, as well from the medieval practice of compiling *florilegia* – literally, "collections of flowers (literary excerpts)" characterised by "morally led selection and... arrangement".<sup>81</sup> As Ann Blair explains, readers selected "passages of interest for the rhetorical turns of phrase, the dialectical arguments, or the factual information they contain" which they then copied into their commonplace book, "grouping them under appropriate headings to facilitate later retrieval and use, notably in composing prose of one's own".<sup>82</sup> The technique originated as a specialist tool for academics,

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MA, 1925); E. G. Fletcher (ed.), *The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D., by James Boswell, with Marginal Comments from Two Copies Annotated by Hester Thrale Lynch Piozzi*, 3 vols (New York, 1963). "Association copies" are discussed in Jackson, *Marginalia*, 244.

<sup>79</sup> For a noteworthy exception, see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 109–33.

<sup>80</sup> Allan, "Some Notes and Problems", 110–3; see his forthcoming *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge University Press); Colclough, "Recovering the Reader"; S. Miller, *Assuming the Positions: Cultural Pedagogy and the Politics of Commonplace Writing* (Pittsburgh PA, 1998); Robert Darnton, "Extraordinary Commonplaces", *New York Review of Books*, 47: 20 (21 Dec, 2000); P. Beal, "Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book", in W. Speed Hill (ed.), *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts* (Binghamton NY, 1993); and especially Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven CT, 2001).

<sup>81</sup> A. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford, 1996), 25; M. J. Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York, 1962; repr. Westport, CT, 1974).

<sup>82</sup> A. Blair, "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book", *JHI*, 53 (1992), 541.

lawyers and physicians; commonplace books were treated as store-houses of readily available knowledge that a writer, orator or courtier could parachute into his own arguments and discourse.<sup>83</sup>

The perception persists that commonplace books were less important in the eighteenth century. Ann Moss believes that

The decline of the commonplace into the trivial and the banal was foreshadowed in the seventeenth century, accelerated in the eighteenth century, and was irreversible by the nineteenth... It was by Locke's time a rather lowly form of life, adapted to fairly simple tasks, and confined to the backwaters of intellectual activity.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, the technique was refreshed by John Locke, whose "New Method" was published in English for the first time in 1706.<sup>85</sup> Locke laid down strict rules to allow the commonplace book to act more efficiently as a filing system, dividing entries by subject rather than author or text, and indexing them for ease of cross reference. More importantly, Locke encouraged readers to invent their own subject headings, disrupting the traditional generic labels of commonplacing. The Lockean method was thereby designed to develop independent critical and orderly thinking rather than to circulate a stable body of established knowledge: as Locke himself argued, "when we take in any fresh Ideas, Occurrences and Observations, we should dispose of them in their proper places, and see how they stand and agree with the rest of our Notions on the same subject".<sup>86</sup> Dugald Stewart later elaborated that by organising notes under "certain general heads", a reader

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<sup>83</sup> On professional legal and medical commonplace books, see Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, vi, 39.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 279. Richard Yeo argues that the commonplace tradition was dead by the nineteenth century, "commonplace" developing its modern meaning as "a well known piece of information, something that had become unremarkable", "Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728) and the Tradition of Commonplaces", *JHI*, 57 (1996), 178. On this debate, see the review of Havens's *Commonplace Books* in *LH*, 19 (2003), 157–8, by P. Beal.

<sup>85</sup> In France, Sharpe points out that "theories and models remained constant [throughout our period] ... the Thermidoreans dreamed of a family book of exempla, a commonplace book that might inculcate virtue in citizens", *Reading Revolutions*, 280.

<sup>86</sup> L. Dacome, "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain", *JHI*, 65 (2004), 7; quoting Locke; G. C. Meynell, "John Locke's method of Common-Placing", *The Seventeenth Century*, 8 (1993), 245–67. Sharpe suggests that diversity, dissent and subversion of received wisdom often tended to be the end product even of older commonplace techniques; *Reading Revolutions*, 279.

would not only have his knowledge much more completely under his command, but as the particulars classed together would all have some connexion, more or less, with each other, he would be enabled to trace, with advantage, those mutual relations among his ideas, which it is the object of philosophy to ascertain.<sup>87</sup>

Locke's method was extremely popular in Enlightenment Britain, selling increasingly well and appearing in many different editions and adaptations.<sup>88</sup> As DeMaria observes, "almost all serious readers in the eighteenth century compiled such works with a table of contents at the beginning; presumably, they read with an eye to filling out that table". Samuel Johnson maintained a commitment to recording his reading experiences in precisely this way, "reflecting on them and evaluating himself by means of such reflection". The eighteenth-century commonplace book thus became the indispensable tool of the critical reader, allowing him or her to negotiate a path through the "revolutionary" new world of extensive reading with "enforced and regulated intensity" – to avoid, in Dugald Stewart's words, the detrimental "habit of extensive and various reading, without reflection".<sup>89</sup> It also came to be presented as a tool for the common reader rather than just the preserve of the scholar, with blank printed commonplace books explicitly based on Locke's method being mass-produced for the personal use of readers. When John Bell released an updated version of Locke's *Common Place Book* in 1770, he explained its broad utility:

It is not solely for the Divine, the Lawyer, the Poet, Philosopher, or Historian, that this publication is calculated: by these its uses are experimentally known and universally admitted. It is for the use and emolument of the man of business as well as of letters; for men of fashion and fortune as well as of study; for the Traveller, The Trader, and in short for all those who would form a system of useful and agreeable knowledge, in a manner peculiar to themselves, while they are following their accustomed pursuits, either of profit or pleasure.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (London, 1792–1827), 1: 428.

<sup>88</sup> Dacome, "Noting the Mind"; Jackson, *Marginalia*, 184.

<sup>89</sup> DeMaria, "Samuel Johnson and the Reading Revolution", 88; Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 446.

<sup>90</sup> *Bell's Common Place Book, for the pocket; form'd generally upon the principles recommended and practised by Mr. Locke* (London, 1770), [ii]. For a heavily used example, see NAS GD113/1/475, Commonplace Book of a member of the Innes family of Stowe, discussed in detail in Chapter Six, below.



All this derived from the fact that the commonplace book was actually remarkably well suited to the processes of self-improvement and self-fashioning that lay at the heart of eighteenth-century notions of the self. Locke himself had argued that “self identity lay in the mind and resided in the continuity of memory and consciousness”, hence his reinvention of commonplace books as repositories for individualised memories rather than as storehouses for a stable canon of collective knowledge.<sup>91</sup> This realisation in turn helped provoke a revolution in intellectual culture in Britain by which the pursuit of self-knowledge and self-improvement through critical reading, social observation and rational conversation became the leading motives of Addisonian politeness and sociability: as John Brewer argues, “the ideals of politeness... required that a person fashion a polite identity by regulating and refining his passions, a goal that could best be achieved through the medium of literature and the arts”.<sup>92</sup> In this potent cultural context, commonplace books, like diaries, were compiled by readers in search of “their own intellectual, moral and social edification”, desiring “to achieve good taste and refinement” and “to mould character”.<sup>93</sup>

This was precisely the message conveyed by Scottish philosophers who advocated the use of commonplace books by readers to improve themselves. Stewart argued that excerpting material from one’s reading facilitated “perpetual progress in the intellectual powers of the individual”,<sup>94</sup> while the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* informed readers that the process of keeping a commonplace book

not only makes a man read with accuracy and attention, but induces him insensibly to think for himself, provided he considers it not so much as a register of sentiments that strike him in the course of reading, but as a register of his own thoughts upon various subjects.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted by Dacome, “Noting the Mind”, 605.

<sup>92</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures*, 106–10, quote from 106; on politeness, see also L. Klein, “Property and Politeness in the Early Eighteenth-Century Whig Moralists: The Case of *The Spectator*”, in J. Brewer and S. Staves (eds.), *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (London, 1995); idem., *Shaftesbury*; and in Scotland, see Phillipson, “Politics, Politeness and the Anglicisation”; N. Phillipson, “Politics and Politeness in the Reigns of Anne and the Early Hanoverians”, in J. G. A. Pocock (ed.), *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 108; Miller, *Assuming the Positions*, 23. In this sense, commonplace books were ideally placed to contribute to individuals’ self-fashioning of themselves; “self-fashioning” was first advanced to describe how Renaissance authors constructed identity in themselves and in their readers by S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London, 1980; 2005).

<sup>94</sup> Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 445.

<sup>95</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh, 1771), 2: 241.

Indeed, this was the crucial point: in the ideal world, readers would not excerpt material unthinkingly and mechanically from the books they read, but would impose their own scheme on the knowledge they acquired through reading – whether by divorcing material from its original context and entering it instead under philosophical heads, as Locke and Stewart had recommended, or by taking notes from books in their own words. As James Beattie, in a work we have seen was very widely available in provincial Scotland, explained:

When we are so much master of the sentiments of another man as to be able to express them with accuracy in our own words, then we may be said to have digested them, and made them our own; and then it is, and not before, that our understanding is really improved by them. If we chuse to preserve a specimen of an author's style, or to transcribe any of his thoughts in his own words on account of something that pleases in the expression, there can be no harm in this, provided we do not employ too much time in it.<sup>96</sup>

Moreover, commonplace books served to enhance readers' concentration on books, and by sharpening the focus of their reading practices, improve their critical judgement. As Lord Kames explained in his *Loose Hints on Education* (1781), "a person who reads merely for amusement, gives little attention: ideas glide through the mind, and vanish instantly. But let a commonplace book be in view: attention is on the stretch to find matter, and impressions are made that the memory retains". By forcing a reader to be constantly on the look out for material worthy enough to be extracted into his or her commonplace book, Kames argued that "the judgement is in constant exercise, in order to distinguish what particulars deserve remembrance", with the ultimate effect – if the reader persevered in the practice – of fostering "a habit of expressing our thoughts readily and distinctly". He was therefore in no doubt that "young persons, male and female, should have always at hand a commonplace book, for keeping in remembrance observations made in reading, reflecting, conversing, travelling. The advantages are manifold".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> James Beattie, *Essays. On Poetry and Music,... On Laughter,... On the Utility of Classical Learning* (Edinburgh, 1776), 519; Beattie was merely rehashing the advice offered by standard pedagogical writers of the eighteenth century, especially Isaac Watts; see Yeo, "Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*", 172.

<sup>97</sup> Lord Kames, *Loose Hints upon Education, Chiefly concerning the Culture of the Heart* (Edinburgh, 1781), 128–9.

## V

There is no doubt that many contemporary readers earnestly took such advice to heart, attempting to subject their reading habits to the stringent standards of criticism and reflection required. For instance, Alexander Irvine compiled a literary journal (essentially a commonplace book in all but name) explicitly designed to imitate the practices of Edward Gibbon, one of the most celebrated exemplars of critical reading in the late eighteenth century.<sup>98</sup> Although Irvine's focus regularly slipped as he succumbed to the combined distractions of company, drink, food and women, not to mention ill health and poor eyesight, he constantly reiterated his desire to continue in the practice, since

It will always be a pleasing evidence of my perseverance and improvement if as I trust I shall...make any, but by far the most valuable improvement I propose from it is the opinions etc criticisms I intend making on the books I read which I am often much diffculted to do.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, it is clear that provincial readers themselves played a role in disseminating such reading practices, compiling exemplary commonplace books to demonstrate the skills involved to younger relatives, sharing their extracts with others or giving advice on best practice. Eliza Macpherson's letters to her daughter effectively took the form of epistolary commonplace books, filled with extracts from books "since Mother and daughter can benefit from good teaching".<sup>100</sup> In transcribing a passage from Blair's *Sermons*, Harriet was enjoined

To oblige your dear mother by reading it often, and giving your mind time for reflection upon the same – I really think it is amongst his best, for the edification of either sex to more exalted virtue. Do my child read it often, and let it take root – I wish your husband should on the same.<sup>101</sup>

The eminent Scottish diplomat David Murray sat down to write a commonplace book ("the first I ever had, begun 1788") "chiefly with a view to the education of my children",<sup>102</sup> while at the tender age of eight

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<sup>98</sup> See below, Chapter Six.

<sup>99</sup> NLS Acc. 9025, Literary Journal and Digest of Reading of Alexander Irvine of Drum (hereafter, Irvine Diary), entry on 14 November 1802.

<sup>100</sup> NRAS 2614, Bundle 69, Elizabeth Macpherson to Harriet Macintyre, 10 October 1809.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 25 February 1808.

<sup>102</sup> NRAS 776, Volume 314, Commonplace book of David Murray, 2nd Earl of Mansfield.

Marjory Fleming was forcibly compelled to take notes from her reading by her twenty-two year old cousin, as endearingly reflected in the very first book she wrote about in her commonplace book: “Tales of fashionable life ar very good storys Isabella campels me to sit down & not to rise till this page is done but it is very near finished only one line to write”.<sup>103</sup> Elizabeth Rose probably shared her own extensive commonplace books not only with a network of close female friends in rural Nairnshire, but also with her son and granddaughters.<sup>104</sup> She seems to have been devoted to the practice of critical reading enshrined in commonplace books from an early age, for when in her early twenties she asked Mackenzie’s advice about reading habits he replied

I am very little able to point out anything like a proper system of reading; To you, I fancy indeed it is very little necessary... There is one Method which in my opinion is not a little useful in reading any Book of Excellence, especially if it is a Book of original Observation; and that is, when we find any Remark particularly impressive, to take it down in writing, subjoining any Comments that our own View of it may suggest: these, when we meet with Passages tending to illustrate them, in the same, or other Authors, we may review correct & alter, as our Information on the Point is increased. This I believe will be found to give a Freedom of thinking on all Subjects & a Distinctness on that one, upon which we are employed.<sup>105</sup>

Elizabeth Rose, Marjory Fleming and Eliza Macpherson may have been encouraged to adopt this potent ideology of reading by Scotland’s strongly Calvinist tradition, which Katharine Glover rightly argues “imbued the written word with heightened meaning, and viewed copying almost as an act of reverent self-implication”.<sup>106</sup> Nowhere is this

<sup>103</sup> *Marjory’s Book: The Complete Journals, Letters and Poems of a Young Girl*, ed. Barbara McLean (Edinburgh, 1999), 3; for Marjory Fleming’s short life, see ODNB. The book was Maria Edgeworth’s *Tales of Fashionable Life* (London, 1809–1812).

<sup>104</sup> M. Towsey, “‘An Infant Son to Truth Engage’: Virtue, Responsibility and Self-Improvement in the Reading of Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock, 1745–1815”, *Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*, 2 (2007), 69–92; idem., “‘Observe her Heedfully’: Elizabeth Rose on Women Writers”, *Women Writers* (forthcoming). For similarly pedagogical use of commonplace books in contemporary France, see D. Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, 2009), ch4; N. Pellegrin, “Lire avec des plumes ou l’art – féminin? – de l’extrait à la fin du XVIIIe siècle”, in I. Brouard-Arends (ed.), *Lectrices d’Ancien Régime* (Rennes, 2003). My sincerest thanks to Professor Goodman for drawing the last source to my attention, and for generously furnishing a copy of her work on French women readers in advance of publication.

<sup>105</sup> *Mackenzie’s Letters*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Glover, “Female Mind”, 9.

more evident than in the commonplaces collected by Jane Mary Campbell Macnabb (originally from Argyll) while living in India with her husband, an eminent East India Company surgeon. A daughter of the manse, Macnabb was interested in polite literature (she read Robertson, Blair, Fordyce, Gregory and Alison), but her reading notes were compiled with the impassioned sense that the Almighty was looking over her shoulder: "If I were to compare the time spent on the lesser subjects with that spent in serious authors, religious or moral reflections how should I stand to think of giving an account at the day of judgement?"<sup>107</sup> The debonair Henry Cockburn wrote to a childhood friend that he had "long made a practice of keeping... a commonplace book", admitting that he too had devotional intent in maintaining

This humiliating record of my weakness, this map of my mind, to which I often turn when I wish to examine any place I have passed in my progress... What sublime delight can a man enjoy, than that of watching, like God, taking care of the world, the progress of his own mind.<sup>108</sup>

To confirm the link between commonplacing and devotional reflection, more than one contemporary reader carefully transcribed Hugh Blair's injunction on a theme intimately connected with personal reading and reflection:

Study to acquire the habit of attention to thought – let your thoughts be made the subject of thought, & review – say to yourself; to what is my attention directed? – could I without a blush disclose it to the world? – were God instantly to call me into judgement, what account could I give of it to Him? – will I be the wiser or better, for dwelling on such thoughts to now fill my mind? – are they intirely consistant with my innocence, & with my present & future peace? – if they are not, to what purpose do I indulge such unprofitable or dangerous musings?<sup>109</sup>

Whether inspired by devotional necessity or by reading the Scottish *literati*, many Scottish commonplacers evidently strove hard to maintain the approved levels of self-criticism and considered reflection in their reading. In practice, however, many could not live up to the stringent standards expected of them and one frequently comes across items

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<sup>107</sup> BL Ms Eur F206/157b, Jane Mary Macnabb (nee Campbell), Personal Papers; the notes are unpaginated and on loose sheets, but were almost certainly originally bound together in a number of volumes.

<sup>108</sup> *Cockburn's Letters*, 14.

<sup>109</sup> NLS Ms 8240, Amusements in Solitude, f24v; NAS GD 38/1/1246/46, Extracts from Books. The original is Hugh Blair, *Sermons* (15th edn; London, 1792), 2: 47–8.

described as “commonplace books” by their compilers that bear little resemblance to the model advanced in the reading manuals and conduct literature. Readers frequently jettisoned the philosophical heads so enthusiastically propagated by Locke and others, and all sense of order and critical engagement was often abandoned by commonplacers more intent on excerpting the substance of books they borrowed from libraries for only a limited time.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, some readers’ haphazard approaches to commonplacing have justified the pessimism of Moss and others regarding the fate of this great Renaissance tradition in the Georgian period:

It is by no means unusual to find examples of manuscript notebooks carefully ruled up as commonplace-books with the traditional run of mostly moral heads, and even with a nicely calligraphed index and a few desultory entries. But written consecutively across the blank pages will be extracts from reading unrelated to the heads, letters and poems by the owner or of personal interest to him, drafts of sermons, political and theological ruminations of topical interest, and scraps of uncoordinated trivia.<sup>111</sup>

Consider, for example, the range of surviving “commonplace books” featuring notes from Adam Smith’s extremely influential and very widely distributed *The Wealth of Nations*. More often than not, such notes contain only a very brief précis of Smith’s leading points, as in the commonplace book of Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot, for instance, or in the anonymous notes compiled by a member of the Stuart Stevenson family of Castlemilk and Torrance.<sup>112</sup> They tend to be compliant to Smith’s original, extracting the very words he used (with varying degrees of accuracy) and making no effort either to engage in his broader arguments or to collate passages from different parts of the original that bear on similar themes. At least William Drummond, a nurseryman and seed merchant from Stirling, attempted to compile an index of Smith’s leading themes. He thereby enforced his own scheme (albeit merely alphabetical) on the material he read, prioritising

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<sup>110</sup> For example, George Ridpath “revised some of Douglas [William Douglas’s *Summary Historical and Politic...of the British Settlements in North America* (1749)], and wrote some things out of him in order to returning him to-morrow” on Friday 19th March 1756. He had borrowed the book from the Kelso Subscription Library on 23 January; *Ridpath*, 53, 59.

<sup>111</sup> Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 279–80.

<sup>112</sup> NLS Acc. 6684/45–6, Commonplace books of Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot; NLS Ms 5330, Miscellaneous papers, Stuart Stevenson of Castlemilk and Torrance.

material relating to his own circumstances (for instance, the note that “Agriculture requires more knowledge than most mechanical professions and is yet carried on without any restrictions”), but given the enormity of his task he seems quickly to have given up and moved on to another book entirely.<sup>113</sup>

Indeed, in an extensive trawl of surviving Scottish commonplace books dating from the Georgian period, only two have been found whose compilers’ persisted with subjecting *The Wealth of Nations* to any degree of independent critical or organisational analysis. The first of these, compiled by Alexander Fraser of Reelig, Inverness-shire, had a clearly pedagogical intent. Fraser was destined to join his elder brothers in service in India and apparently compiled the commonplace book late in his teenage years as an introduction to the standards of commerce and trade that he might expect to meet in a nation whose circumstances were so different from those of modern Britain.<sup>114</sup> The opening pages of his commonplace book were filled up with a series of over eight hundred questions directly addressing Smith’s original text, although it is not clear whether Fraser himself had composed these questions as a memory aid or whether they were set for him by the family tutor to test his reading.<sup>115</sup> The questions ranged from simple one liners addressing core features of Smith’s analysis, such as numbers 3, “In what does the wealth [of] a country consist?” 7, “How does Dr Smith illustrate the division of labour?” and 11, “What is the principle which has given rise to the division of labour?” to more detailed questions that focused explicitly on the English East India Company that Fraser was soon to join, including numbers 516, “In what respects do joint stock companies differ from private copartneries?” and 528, “Why would the India company probably fail if they were to trade as a joint

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<sup>113</sup> NLS Acc. 5699, Commonplace book of William Drummond of Coney Park, Stirling (hereafter Drummond Commonplace Book), ff62–64v; quotes from f62r and f63r. My identification derives from the will of a William Drummond, nursery and seedsman of Coney Park, who died in 1824; NAS SC67/36/8, 209.

<sup>114</sup> Very little is known about Alexander (who died as a young man in India), but his brothers James Baillie and William are both included in the *ODNB*.

<sup>115</sup> Fraser’s notes may rather have been a formal exercise for the East India College at Haileybury, which we know to have taught works by Smith and Malthus. I am grateful to Dr Alexander Morrison for bringing the Haileybury curriculum to my attention. Alwyn Clark describes the impact made by the teachings of Hugh Cleghorn, Professor of Civil History at St Andrews University, whose lectures were clearly influenced by Smith, Millar and others, on students he later encountered serving in India; see A. Clark, *An Enlightened Scot: Hugh Cleghorn, 1752–1837* (Duns, 1992).

stock company after the expiration of their charter & without exclusive privileges?"<sup>116</sup>

Fraser may therefore have imposed his own organisational structure on Smith's arguments, but he was patently not exercising his critical judgement. Though usually accurate, his answers did not represent independent engagement with Smith's text but rather compliantly followed the terms of Smith's analysis, usually copying Smith word for word. Fraser's answer to question 11 merely reads like the dutiful response of a bored undergraduate student, reproducing the relevant portion of Smith's text mechanically and at full length.<sup>117</sup> He was not especially persistent: he left many questions unanswered, many were treated in the manner of question 516 noted above, to which Fraser merely appended a page reference, "122-3",<sup>118</sup> and his answers increasingly reflected the short attention span of a student day-dreaming of more exciting pursuits.

A Scottish reader who subjected *The Wealth of Nations* to a greater degree of critical analysis, while also being intimately associated with Britain's imperial effort, was Andrew Douglas of Cavers, Berwickshire, a paymaster in the Royal Navy. For the most part, he was content simply to compile a register of the basic facets of Smith's argument: "Labour is the Fountain from whence flow the necessities & conveniences of life – and the wealth of nations"; "The increased improvements in the productive Powers of labour seem to have been the effects of the division of labour".<sup>119</sup> This was entirely consistent with his wider commonplace technique, as we shall see, although in this instance he added occasional commentary of his own. On "man's help from his brethren", for instance, Douglas noted gratefully "It is true – that it is imprudent there to expect so as to depend upon it – yet I thank God – that I as well as many others have there found it". He elaborated on Smith's discussion of the origin of manufactures ("Charters were granted to corporations – which established a kind of monopoly, to nurse arts in their infancy – but the swaddling clothes of children – are absurd in

<sup>116</sup> NRAS 2696, Volume 18, Commonplace Book of A. C. Fraser on Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.

<sup>117</sup> NRAS 2696, Volume 18, commonplace book of A. C. Fraser, f3r; compare Smith, WN, 1: 25, 27–8.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., f95r; probably referring to Smith, WN, 2: 740–1.

<sup>119</sup> NLS Adv. Ms 17.1.10, Commonplace Book of Andrew Douglas (hereafter Douglas Commonplace Book), f203r; compare WN, 1: 10, 13.



mankind thus incorporated towns have drove manufactures into their suburbs & neighbourhoods”), while he added to Smith’s argument that “poverty...is extremely unfavourable to the rearing of children” his own gloss, “especially in an immoral and luxurious people”.<sup>120</sup>

On occasion, Douglas criticised elements of Smith’s analysis. He took exception to Smith’s derogation of “exclusive companies”, with the East India Company once more explicitly in view, noting “NB – without the united efforts of the wealth & strength of a company – could the English ever have established factories in Turkey, the East Indies or in Africa? Where individuals would require protective government, policy & security of some community”. Perhaps most fittingly, given his own career, he took issue with a note summarising Smith’s view that mankind’s trust in “good fortune...overrules our Army and Navy” with his own qualification, “true, but who that resents all expenses, risks & losses would ever put plough in ground”. These minor glosses were supported by notes in which Douglas appeared to criticise Smith’s style of argument, such as the accusatory note, “Subdivisions of self-evidence facts, or of obvious truths – rather obscure than clear them”.<sup>121</sup>

Douglas was therefore prepared to engage on his own terms with Smith, even though for the most part his notes were thoroughly compliant to Smith’s original. Indeed, Douglas’s rare attempts to engage with Smith’s original do not measure up to more autonomous critical readings, including those of the anonymous Westmorland common-placer introduced by David Allan. This reader ingeniously applied Smith’s “definitive critique of mercantilist policy” to the more practical set of problems associated with the administration of agricultural land in the rugged uplands of the northern Pennines:

Confident in navigating the printed work’s closely-argued text, he was also dextrous enough to be able to read not sequentially but highly selectively, expertly cross-referring to related passages and highlighting those which supplied theoretical discussion germane to these practical concerns.<sup>122</sup>

No Scottish reader whose notes from reading *The Wealth of Nations* have survived proved remotely capable of emulating the “seamless interweaving of direct quotation with condensation and paraphrase”

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., f203r, f205v, f204v; compare Smith, WN, 1: 26, 140–1, 97.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., ff203r–211v; compare Smith, WN, 2: 735, 125–6.

<sup>122</sup> Allan, “A Reader Writes”, 225–6.

achieved by the anonymous Westmorland reader.<sup>123</sup> This immediately reflects one of the inherent limitations of this approach to the history of reading, since so many more contemporary readers must have encountered Smith without evidence of their reading experiences coming down to us in any form – whether this be because their reading notes do not survive, or because they did not write down what they thought of Smith in the first place.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, the sheer intellectual capacity of the Westmorland reader seems to have been extremely unusual: after all, Allan highlights “this reader’s competence in tackling what to its contemporaries – indeed to many of Smith’s own friends – was a famously daunting text”, citing David Hume’s astute warning that it would require “too much thought to be as popular as Mr. Gibbon’s [*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*]”.<sup>125</sup> Even the usually adroit Alexander Irvine (who as we shall see was sufficiently intelligent to treat certain other books in precisely this manner) struggled unsuccessfully to come to terms with *The Wealth of Nations*, “a book which will require to be studied more than read”.<sup>126</sup>

## VI

Contemporary responses to *The Wealth of Nations* demonstrate that commonplacing depended to a great extent on the intellectual capacity and application of the reader. On the one hand, it allowed critical readers to improve their mental capacities, but it also enabled less skilled or less highly motivated readers to copy material mechanically from books without much discernment or reflection. While Samuel Johnson used commonplace books as only one part of an exceptionally variegated approach to reading, in the hands of less proficient readers commonplace books could lead to mechanical and inattentive reading, as well as to a great deal of “useless deliberation” – hence Swift’s notorious

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>124</sup> For more extended discussion, see below, Chapter Six.

<sup>125</sup> Allan, “A Reader Writes”, 226, 233; citing *Letters of David Hume*, 2: 314. For other English readers of *The Wealth of Nations*, see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 188–99; subjects include other individuals unusually well-placed to interrogate Smith’s original critically and autonomously, such as the Kentish clergyman James Gambier and the politician William Wyndham Grenville (who as Baron Grenville was Speaker of the Commons before becoming Prime Minister).

<sup>126</sup> Irvine Diary, entry for 18 September 1800.

quip, “What tho’ his *Head* be empty... provided his *Commonplace-Book* be full”.<sup>127</sup> This worry undoubtedly coloured much eighteenth-century discourse on the issue, even prompting the Kirkcudbright diarist David Campbell to jot down, “Begin to think that taking notes on reading is not a beneficial practice”.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, even the most intellectually submissive commonplace books are useful alongside marginalia, diaries and correspondences in helping us to assess how historical readers approached their reading, what influenced their reading strategies, why they chose certain books and what they hoped to achieve by reading them. By extracting material from Smith in whatever degree of critical competency, each of the readers discussed above revealed that they regarded Smith as in some way important for understanding the world in which they lived. For Douglas and Fraser, involved as they both were (or were soon to be) in Britain’s relations with elements of the non-commercial world, understanding what Smith had to say was clearly considered of vital importance to the way they set about their careers. Moreover, although they lie at varying points on Roger Chartier’s eloquently conceived scale “between the virtuosi among readers and the least skilled at reading”, every one of them reflected their faith in the ideology of reading prescribed by the Scottish Enlightenment theorists, subscribing to the well-honed mantra that the act of writing down extracts from their reading would improve their critical judgement and refine their taste.<sup>129</sup> They were also assisted by the burgeoning critical press, with literary reviews in the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review*, the *Scots Magazine*, the *Annual Register* and latterly the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood’s Magazine* literally telling readers what books to read and how to read them. In this sense, the fashioning of an enlightenment self – if this was indeed what contemporary readers thought they were doing – was very rarely, if ever, an activity conducted in the presence of the text alone, but was instead a constant dialogue between reader, text and critical

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<sup>127</sup> DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson*, 46; Swift quote on 89, though he was often a great deal more positive about commonplacing.

<sup>128</sup> Diary of David Campbell, 5 September 1823. Campbell’s indecision on whether or not to make notes from his reading seems itself to have been an important part of his own self-fashioning process: he had earlier been perfectly happy to take notes from Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson*, determining “to keep separately an account of what books I should read with remarks”; 6 February 1822.

<sup>129</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, 4.

community. With these crucial methodological and conceptual frameworks in mind, we turn now to explore in more detail how and why the books of the Scottish Enlightenment were read in provincial Scotland, examining the strategies employed by readers of all abilities in their attempts to fashion and consolidate their own enlightened identities.

## CHAPTER SIX

### “A MAN OF MODERATE PASSIONS”: FASHIONING AN ENLIGHTENED SELF

A member of the Innes family of Stowe started to compile a commonplace book sometime in the 1790s that was typical of its kind.<sup>1</sup> Deploying John Bell's printed template in the manner prescribed by John Locke, Dugald Stewart and countless other educational writers of the eighteenth century, the Innes commonplacer collected reading notes under a wide range of subject headings including standard topics of eighteenth-century moral philosophy such as virtue, learning, courage, justice, liberty and reason. As such, the Innes commonplace book reads like a straight-forward exercise in self-fashioning, seemingly intended to inculcate precisely those values that Rick Sher suggests were endorsed by “Enlightenment supporters everywhere.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the Innes commonplace book offers little sense of how the compiler personally engaged with books by David Hume, Hugh Blair, William Robertson, Joseph Addison, Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith and Lord Chesterfield. Instead, the Innes reading notes were highly constrained by the generic requirements of commonplacing, being driven by a search for pithy phrases and memorable aphorisms which might later be used to enliven our reader's conversation and beautify his or her letter-writing. There is little sense that Innes actually subscribed in any depth to the sentiments he collected and at no time did he introduce independent commentary on the notes he extracted. As a result, the personal meaning of such notes is often entirely irrecoverable; at times, indeed, it seems the commonplacer's attention wandered from the search for edifying material towards more frivolous anecdotes, such as that on “the English” apparently confirming their fondness for puddings:

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<sup>1</sup> NAS GD113/1/475, *Bell's Common Place Book, Form'd generally upon the Principles Recommended and Practiced by Mr. Locke* (London, 1770), Innes of Stowe copy. For a more detailed discussion, see my “‘Patron of Infidelity’: Scottish Readers Respond to David Hume, c.1750–c.1820”, *BH*, 11 (2008), 89–123.

<sup>2</sup> Sher, “Storm over the Literati”, 43.

David Hume relating the manner in which Henry the 8th gifted the revenues of the convents says, “he was so profuse in these liberalities that he is said to have given a woman the whole revenue of a convent, as a reward for making a pudding which happened to gratify his palate”.<sup>3</sup>

The Innes commonplace book therefore reinforces the dilemma outlined at the end of the previous chapter that interpreting surviving reading experiences is by no means a simple procedure – in Robert Darnton’s words, “the documents rarely show readers at work, fashioning meaning from texts, and the documents are texts themselves, which require interpretation”.<sup>4</sup> As we have seen, reading was at all times contingent not simply on the ability and application of the individual reader, but was also guided – especially in the eighteenth century, with the rise of Enlightened literary criticism and Addisonian politeness – by a range of external cultural forces that had a vested interest in shaping its intellectual outcomes. This chapter therefore looks more systematically at contemporary responses to the books of the Scottish Enlightenment, paying close attention to precisely what was involved when readers encountered one of the celebrated philosophical or historical books of the Scottish Enlightenment. By analysing the procedures adopted by readers in making sense of these books, we can hope to reconstruct the relationships that developed between books and their readers, the impact they had on people’s beliefs, values and habits of mind, and ultimately the Enlightenment’s contribution to the construction of personal identities.

## I

When they first came across Enlightenment books, readers commonly compiled digests of the key terms involved. This was precisely the approach taken by Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot, near Langholm, upon first opening Thomas Reid’s *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* sometime in the late 1780s, simply summarising the broadly instructive intent of his “Preliminary Chapter” on the “explication of words”:

As there is nothing which is a greater obstruction to philosophy than the ambiguity of words we shall give a definition of the principle ones used in this book.

<sup>3</sup> NAS GD113/1/475, *Bell’s Common Place Book*, 20; quoting Hume, *History*, 3: 255.

<sup>4</sup> Darnton, “First Steps”, 7.

1st We understand by mind that which thinks, wills, remembers etc. As we define body to be divisible, moveable, we define mind to be whatever thinks.

2nd The method in which the mind thinks is called, its operations. It is to be observed that operations are only applied to the mind. For as body is inactive and inanimate we speak of its properties not operations, but as the mind in most of its modes of thinking is not merely passive but even active, we speak of its operations.

3rd We are said to perceive things of whose existence we are fully convinced, we can conceive or imagine a silver stream but no man can say he perceived such a thing, hence the difference between perception and conception.<sup>5</sup>

Such notes say little about Stephana Malcolm's engagement with Reid, but do reveal how earnestly self-fashioning young readers set about the task of overcoming the formidable challenges posed by moral philosophy – especially for those who did not have access to the university education that usually supplied the technical grounding required. Although Stephana Malcolm skipped over a number of simple definitions that she evidently understood without feeling the need to note down a reminder (point three here, for instance, actually appears as point six in Reid's original), her approach was entirely passive and it was applied throughout Reid's text. In reading through "Chapter 18", for instance, her notes continued to facilitate her comprehension of Reid's key terms ("we have other objects of perception besides the primary and secondary most of which are included under the following articles, viz. 1st certain conditions of our bodies, 2nd mechanical powers"), this time copied down alongside an illustration which must have been readily familiar from Stephana's personal experience:

The notion which our senses gives us of the toothache, headache, etc is something alike the secondary qualities in the toothache there is first a painful feeling, secondly a conception of some disorder in the tooth which occasions the pain, both of which are directed by the same word. We say that we feel the toothache, but that we perceive a colour, the only reason that can be given for this difference is that as it is accompanied by a painful sensation and draws our attention, whereas in colour it is quite indifferent and does not draw our attention.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> NLS Acc. 6684/46, Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot, Extracts 1792, f1r; cf. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 1785), 9, 13, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, f7r; cf. Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, 248–9.

Stephana probably read Reid's *Intellectual Powers* when she was quite a young girl and her engagement with other core philosophical texts of the Scottish Enlightenment matured markedly over time.<sup>7</sup> Later in the same notebook, for instance, she took down a sequence of notes from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* which displayed a greater degree of engagement with its principal themes and concepts. She still made sure to note down the key terms of Smith's discourse, including his opening definition of sympathy as a principle in man's "nature which interest[s] him in the fortune of others and render[s] their happiness necessary to him though he derives nothing from it but the pleasure of seeing it".<sup>8</sup> This time, however, her primary purpose seems not to have been merely to comprehend the text in front of her but to relate it to her own behaviour, compiling an effective précis of Smith's most well-known arguments that can only have served to encourage her to cultivate sympathetic fellow feeling:

Whatever may be the cause of symp: nothing pleases us more than to observe in others a fellow-feeling with all the emotions in our own breast and we are always shocked by the appearance of the contrary[.] sympathy enlivens joy and alleviates grief by presenting another source of satisfaction.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, in her later commonplace books, Stephana Malcolm scoured a range of philosophical and didactic texts for conservative moral aphorisms, now eschewing the close attention to key terms and chapter outlines that had characterised her earliest reading notes. Many of these aphorisms were gender specific, entirely in keeping with the "virtuous discourse" of the Scottish Enlightenment which John Dwyer insists conceived women as "domestic angels", charged with safe guarding the moral fortitude of their brothers, husbands and sons.<sup>10</sup> From Hugh Blair's highly regarded *Sermons*, for instance, she took down a note comparing "the gentle mind" favourably to "the violent spirit [which] like troubled waters, renders back the images of things distorted & broken; & communicates to them all that disordered motion

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<sup>7</sup> We have no precise dates for Stephana Malcolm. She was the unmarried sister of Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm (1768–1838), who besides her commonplace books also left a series of diaries covering the years 1794–1860.

<sup>8</sup> NLS Acc. 6684/46, Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot, Extracts, 1792, inverse f1r; cf. Smith, *TMS*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, inverse f1v; here, Malcolm conflates passages from Smith, *TMS*, 14 and 17.

<sup>10</sup> Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 118–37.



arises solely from its own agitation".<sup>11</sup> A characteristic passage copied down from Henry Mackenzie's *Mirror* magazine commended women's due deference in polite society ("let a woman's understanding be ever so strong, let her mind be ever so accomplish<sup>d</sup>; it should always be delivered *sotto-voce*"),<sup>12</sup> while the much loved conduct writer James Fordyce provided an account of the rewards of "a persevering virtue".<sup>13</sup>

Similar procedures characterised the reading strategies of other contemporary readers of moral philosophy. The navy paymaster Andrew Douglas, who never attended university as far as we can tell,<sup>14</sup> lavished a great deal of attention on Ferguson's *Institutes* (eminently well suited for the task as an explicitly pedagogical text) precisely because it explained in simple terms how speculative philosophy related to everyday behaviour: "In speculation we endeavour to establish general rules. In practice, we study particular cases, or apply general rules to regulate our conduct". By noting down Ferguson's definitions of basic terms in philosophical discourse ("a priori" vs. "a posteriori", "analytic" vs. "synthetic", etc.),<sup>15</sup> Douglas's notes effectively took the place of a university education, preparing him eventually for a fascinating and imaginative engagement with James Beattie's *Essay on Truth* which took direct aim at David Hume, as we shall see. For the time being, however, Douglas proceeded to fillet the rest of Ferguson's primer for useful tips and maxims on behaviour – under such characteristic eighteenth-century commonplace heads as "charity", "luxury", "credit", "liberty" and "public spirit".<sup>16</sup> As was Douglas's habit, he transcribed material from Ferguson word for word, but did elaborate on occasion, adding "Queere" (Query) alongside maxims that he considered needed further reflection – such

<sup>11</sup> NLS Acc.6684/45, Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot, Extracts 1790, f2v; cf. Blair, *Sermons*, 1: 162–3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., f3v (Stephana's emphasis); cf. *The Mirror* (London, 1794), 2: 165–6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., f4r; cf. James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (London, 1766), 2: 119–20. Dwyer insists that "the enthusiastic reception with which [Fordyce's] sermons were met in Scotland was unparalleled"; *Virtuous Discourse*, 118.

<sup>14</sup> No one of his name appears in the matriculation or graduation records of the Scottish universities for this period, although it is notoriously difficult to identify students. At Edinburgh University, records did not include students' place of birth (until 1811) or parents' names (until 1920), and besides many did not bother with the formalities of matriculation or graduation.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol 3, f87r; cf., Adam Ferguson, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy. For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1769), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., ff87–9; cf. Ferguson, *Institutes*, 249, 270, 274, 288, 304. Douglas did not, though, deploy a Lockean index to keep track of such heads; his notes were arranged sequentially.

as a note on justice that “the act of an individual is not the act of the state”.<sup>17</sup>

Although Douglas neglected the organisational niceties of formal commonplace technique – working his way systematically through each book rather than entering extracts from different books under Lockean thematic heads – he still managed to plunder Beattie’s *Essays on Poetry and Music* for material of a similarly moralistic nature that might guide his own conduct. In this instance, the favourite Scottish Enlightenment principle of sympathy again came to the fore – indeed, Douglas labelled the extract “Beattie on Sympathy” when indexing the commonplace book in which it appeared.<sup>18</sup> Once again, Douglas first took time to note down a basic definition of his key term: “sympathy transmutes ourselves into the state of others, by adopting their joys & miseries as our own. They who have a lively imagination, keen feelings, or what we call a tender heart are the most subject to sympathy”. Beattie then provided reassurance that sympathetic instincts could be developed in someone who was not so naturally inclined to them, with Douglas carefully listing the prescribed programme of improvement:

Attention, the study of the works of nature & art, experience of adversity, the love of virtue & of mankind, tend greatly to cherish sympathy...and cautiously avoiding every occasion of giving pain or offence.

Finally, however, Douglas copied down Beattie’s thoughts on the significance of sympathy in human conduct apparently in a deliberate effort to improve his own behaviour. Sympathy, he noted eagerly, “render[s] a man humanly amiable & useful”;

Sympathy might be made a powerful instrument of moral discipline employed in calling forth our sensibility towards such emotions only as favour virtue & invigorate the mind; cherishing the passions, which improve the heart can hardly be indulged to excess.<sup>19</sup>

The same quest for easily digestible advice on moral conduct seems to have been the ultimate purpose of an anonymous commonplace book with a Brechin provenance. Compiled in the first decade of the

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., f88r; cf. Ferguson, *Institutes*, 229.

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol 1, f292v.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., f128v; cf. Beattie, *Essays on Poetry and Music*, 489–92. On the concept of sympathy in the Scottish Enlightenment, see Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 52–65; Broadie, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 101–8; Luigi Turco, “Moral Sense and the Foundations of Morals”, A. Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003); Berry, *Social Theory*, 156–6.

nineteenth century, it featured extensive educative extracts from John Gregory's *Comparative View*. In this instance, the reader focused on the mental capacities of mankind, collecting tidbits of readily familiar factual information that nevertheless highlighted the rationality that sets man apart from beast – including the diverting fact that “Laughter and shedding of tears are peculiar to man & seem to be expressions of certain emotions of the soul unknown to other animals”.<sup>20</sup> Once again, however, the Brechin commonplacer focused increasingly on aspects of human behaviour that it would be beneficial for him to emulate, especially fellow-feeling and sociability, “That distinguishing principle of mankind which unites them into societies & attaches them to one another by sympathy & affection, & is the source of the most heartfelt pleasure which we ever taste”. Thus our anonymous reader may have been convinced of the need to cultivate his own sociability not just to achieve material advancement in the world but more especially for the sake of his own personal happiness:

When abstraction from company is carried far, it occasions great ignorance of life & manners, & necessarily deprives a man of all those little accomplishments and graces which are essential to polished & elegant society, & which can only be acquired by mixing with the world. The want of these is often an insuperable bar to the advancement of persons of merit, & proves therefore a frequent source of their disgust at the world, & consequently at themselves; for no man can be happy in himself who thinks ill of every one around him. It is unreasonable in any man, who lives detached from society to complain that his merit is neglected when he never has made it known.<sup>21</sup>

It was not simply philosophical books that could provide such authoritative advice on moral conduct. As at least one contemporary reader explicitly recognised, “history is philosophy teaching by example, [but] it cannot produce that effect unless we suppose those examples true”.<sup>22</sup> In this instance, the Aberdeenshire law student Alexander Irvine commented specifically on the tendency of classical historians to invent set piece speeches for rhetorical and didactic effect, but there was little

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<sup>20</sup> NAS GD2/308/2, Extracts from different authors, unpaginated; cf., John Gregory, *Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World* (3rd edn; London, 1766), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Extracts from different authors, unpaginated; cf. Gregory, *Comparative View*, 87, 80. On the Scots insistence on the sociability of man, see Berry, *Social Theory*, 23–48, 180–1.

<sup>22</sup> Irvine Diary, entry dated 2 February 1801.

doubt in other readers' minds that the historical examples furnished by Scottish Enlightenment historians were not only genuine but also useable. The Innes commonplacer raided Hume's *History of England* for conduct models on a very wide range of themes, using Henry VII as a warning against "avarice" ("he remains an instance almost singular of a man placed in a high station, and possessed of talents for great affairs, in whom that passion predominated above ambition") and Henry IV as an exemplar of "ambition" ("if we give indulgence to ambition in a monarch, or rank it, as the vulgar are inclined to do, among the virtues, he was unstained by any blemish").<sup>23</sup> Another member of the Irvine family, perhaps Alexander's uncle, the art dealer James Irvine, collected a wide-ranging catalogue of historical exempla from the books of Lord Hailes, Robert Henry and William Robertson. Most dramatically, Irvine transcribed at full length Robertson's extensive pen portrait of the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise:

No princess ever possessed qualities more capable of rendering her administration illustrious, or her people happy. Of much discernment and no less address, of great intrepidity, and equal prudence; gentle & humane; without weakness; zealous for her religion, without bigotry; a love of justice, without vigour; one circumstance, however, and that too, the excess of a virtue, rather than any vice, poisoned all these great qualities, and rendered her government unfortunate and her name odious, devoted to the interest of France, her native country, and attached to the Princes of Lorrain her brothers, with most passionate fondness; she departed in order to gratify them from every maxim which her own wisdom or humanity would have approved.<sup>24</sup>

The historical notes of Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock are packed with particularly close scrutiny of the lives and actions of women through history, confirming that history provided exempla for women as well as for men.<sup>25</sup> Most often, and for obvious personal reasons (since she had unexpectedly inherited the title of Kilravock *suo jure* on the early deaths of two brothers), she focused on women who had been forced into the active world of men – including the widow of Don Juan de Padilla, who took up her husband's fight for Toledo after he was executed for treason against Charles V; the Dorsetshire woman who

<sup>23</sup> NAS GD113/1/475, *Bell's Commonplace Book*, 18–9; cf. Hume, *History*, 3: 73; 2: 378.

<sup>24</sup> NRAS1500, Bundle 874, Biographical Notes and Monuments, f2r-v; cf., William Robertson, *History of Scotland* (London, 1759), 1: 196.

<sup>25</sup> See Pearson, *Women's Reading*, 51.

“stayed the night” with the dastardly Colonel Kirke in the forlorn hope of saving her incarcerated brother; and the tale of Henry VI’s consort Margaret, battling (disastrously as it turned out) to secure a prosperous future for her son.<sup>26</sup> More conventionally, her notes from Robertson’s *History of Charles V* featured a succession of masculine models of virtue, most notably Frederick of Saxony (“a prince of such eminent virtue & abilities as to be distinguish’d by the name of sage”), Andrew Doria of Genoa (who “with a magnanimity of which there are few examples...sacrificed all thoughts of aggrandizing himself to the virtuous satisfaction of establishing liberty in his country, the highest object at which ambition can claim”) and Robertson’s principal antagonists, Henry VIII, Francis I and Charles V:

Francis & Henry seldom acted but from the impulses of their passions – & rush<sup>d</sup> headlong towards the object in view, Charles’s measures being the result of cool reflection were disposed into a regular system & carried on upon a concerted plan – Persons who act the former manner naturally pursue the end in view w<sup>o</sup>ut assuming any disguise, or displaying much address such as hold the latter course are apt, in forming as well as in executing their designs, to employ such refinements as always lead to artifice in conduct & often degenerate into deceit.<sup>27</sup>

Although they thereby provided a range of ready-made maxims on virtue and vice, historical works also encouraged readers to consider more directly some of the core concerns of Enlightenment moral philosophy. Elizabeth Rose read Adam Ferguson implicitly as a moralist, with her extracts from his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* focusing invariably on the crucial roles of friendship, fellow feeling and sympathy in binding together society.<sup>28</sup> More importantly, Elizabeth’s reading of Ferguson seems to have prefigured her reading of Robertson’s *Charles V*, allowing her to appreciate how these characteristic moral values of the Scottish Enlightenment had helped to change the course of European history. Having already noted with enthusiasm Ferguson’s discussion of the climatic conditions that gave rise to “the Romantic tales of chivalry” in the “southern nations of Europe”, Elizabeth seized

<sup>26</sup> NAS GD1/726/6, Extracts made by Elizabeth Rose from her reading, 1775 (hereafter, Rose Extracts, 1775), 73–4; cf. Robertson, *Charles V*, 2: 177–8; NAS GD1/726/10, Notes on a History of England, f.60r; ff.23r–24r; cf. Hume, *History*, 4: 462, 2: 481–2.

<sup>27</sup> Rose Extracts, 1775, 76–7, 89r; cf. Robertson, *Charles V*, 2:56, 310–1, 3: 420.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–25. This may have been Ferguson’s purpose; see Forbes “Introduction”, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, xxv–xxvi.

immediately upon Robertson's introductory discussion of chivalry to demonstrate in her own mind how it entrenched refined fellow feeling – as well as the virtues of humanity, gallantry and honour – in modern European society:

Sentiments more liberal & generous had begun to animate the nobles. These were inspired by the spirit of chivalry, which though considered commonly as a wild institution, the effect of caprice & the source of extravagance, arose naturally from the state of society at that period, & had a very serious influence in refining the manners of the European nations... Perhaps the humanity which accompanies all the operations of war, the refinements of gallantry & the point of honour, the three chief circumstances which distinguish modern from ancient manners, may be ascribed in a great measure to this whimsical institution, seemingly of little benefit to mankind.<sup>29</sup>

## II

On the face of it, then, provincial readers personally identified with a range of values and opinions closely associated with the Scottish Enlightenment. They not only took the time to understand the key terms of philosophical discourse, but also seem to have digested the relevance of the enlightened concepts of fellow feeling, sympathy, sociability, humanity, moderation and politeness to their everyday lives, often reading across generic boundaries in their search for moral guidance. The problem with the reading notes surveyed so far in this chapter, however, is that they often give us very little sense of how far their compilers actually engaged with the passages they copied into their commonplace books and reading notes of other kinds. Without explicit commentary or detailed biographical information about the reader, it is usually impossible to tell quite how far the maxims and conduct models they collected truly influenced their behaviour and moral standards. As we have seen, contemporary commentators knew that commonplace books encouraged some readers to collect quotable passages and vacuous truisms with little serious consideration of the material taken down – no matter how insistent they remained that commonplacing should involve concentration, critical judgement and considered reflection.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 19, 51–2; cf., Adam Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh, 1767), 174; Robertson, *Charles V*, 1: 69–71.

Moreover, in many cases, we cannot be certain how far readers made their own choices about what to extract from books – or whether they were guided by a family tutor, a relative or indeed an educational manual. Indeed, in some instances, it is more or less clear that a reader's notes were compiled in a formal educational context. A commonplace book compiled by a young man named William Cochran surviving in the private archival collection at Hunterston House was in effect an abridgement of Francis Hutcheson's *Logicae Compendium* (1759), entirely compliant to Hutcheson's original, with no critical commentary or personal reflection to speak of.<sup>30</sup> *Logicae Compendium* was another explicitly pedagogical text, providing a range of basic detail on the nature of knowledge, the definition of key terms in philosophy and their application to the world of action. In this instance, however, the strong suspicion is that the notes were compiled as a formal university exercise, designed to commit key terms to memory and facilitate their use later in the moral philosophy course at the University of Glasgow.<sup>31</sup> Another commonplacer, the young Henry Robert Oswald (1790–1862), compiled a systematic abridgement of Blair's *Lectures on Belles Lettres* as an adjunct to completing his formal medical training – probably on the instruction of his professors, since this was a key subject in the Scottish curriculum.<sup>32</sup>

In such instances, of course, it is patently obvious that the readers involved were not engaged in a process of voluntary self-improvement, but occasionally readers were much more forthcoming in recording for posterity the extent to which they personally invested in fashioning an enlightened identity. In around 1780, “an invalid veteran officer” named David Melville started to keep a notebook of “writings on philosophical subjects” designed explicitly for his “self-tuition”. By his own admission, he had never been particularly interested in the flighty ruminations of philosophy, being “by both his official public situations and objects of life, in the lines of activity withdrawn from science and speculation”.

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<sup>30</sup> NRAS 852, Bundle 129, William Cochran's *Logica Compendium*, c.1780; cf. Francis Hutcheson, *Logicae Compendium* (Glasgow, 1759).

<sup>31</sup> A William Cochran of Kirkfield, Lanarkshire, is listed as matriculation number 3741 in *The Matriculation Albums of the University of Glasgow, from 1728 to 1858*, ed. W. Innes Addison (Glasgow, 1913).

<sup>32</sup> Oswald only appears in the Edinburgh student rolls in 1844, when he submitted his M.D. thesis, though it is likely he attended Edinburgh University much earlier than this. NLS Ms 9002, Commonplace Book of Henry Robert Oswald; on Blair's *Lectures*, see V. Bevilacqua, “Philosophical Assumptions underlying Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*”, *Western Speech*, 31 (1967), 150–64.

As he recuperated in an unnamed military hospital, however, he “was accidentally attracted and engaged” to such subjects “by hearing the readings to him of the excellent works of the Revd. Dr. Reid”:

Altho’ they not only afforded to him much instruction but a most pleasing entertainment with a high respect for the seeming candor as well as for the abilities and learning of the worthy author, yet he was not so conscious that his own mental faculties or powers (as they are often termed) were of the nature delineated by the Revd. Dr. Reid, but that he became desirous of further satisfaction from self-examination.<sup>33</sup>

Thus Melville was converted to philosophical enquiry by a chance encounter with one of the Scottish Enlightenment’s foremost minds, Thomas Reid. He decided to examine and improve his mental faculties because he felt he did not measure up to Reid’s account of the intellectual powers of man, although his truly atrocious handwriting, the lack of precise biographical information about his life and the poor condition of the manuscript make it impossible to follow precisely how he went about doing so.

The reading notes of Alexander Irvine of Drum allow us to explore more thoroughly the ways in which a contemporary reader deliberately welcomed Enlightenment values into his life, not least because he was actively trying “to improve myself in writing” as well as to formulate appropriate responses to books.<sup>34</sup> Irvine was the eldest son of an impoverished Aberdeenshire laird, training for a career in the Scottish law courts when he began his literary journal in the late 1790s. As we have seen, he set out explicitly to imitate Edward Gibbon’s celebrated “regularity of study” and always strived hard not simply to take appropriate notes from his reading but also to comment critically on the books he read.<sup>35</sup> In collecting notes on taste, that distinctive preoccupation of the Scottish Enlightenment, he deliberately made sure that he measured what he read to his own thoughts on the subject. On first reading Archibald Alison’s *Essays on Taste*, for example, he was “immediately... intoxicated with this delightful performance”, but by the time he had finished the book four days later he was able to propose his own adjustment to Alison’s theory:

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<sup>33</sup> GUL Ms Gen 1266, General David Melville, “writings on philosophical subjects”, c.1780.

<sup>34</sup> Irvine Diary, entry for 6 January 1804.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., inside front cover.



I this evening finish<sup>d</sup> Mr A's book, which I think a most elegant work on the whole, yet however much may be owing to our association of ideas is giving grandeur or sublimity to any object, there must in my opinion be something which attracts that association in the object itself. To take one of his instances, the ideas we entertain with regard to Runnymede may be in a good measure owing to the great event which passed there, but must in some degree also arise from the situation of that romantick spot. Had Culloeden been fought in such a situation we would no doubt have had a similar association but as it was on a bare muir we entertain no such feeling.<sup>36</sup>

The next week, Irvine settled down to Reid's *Inquiry on the Human Mind*, reading "the former part...with very great attention, the latter with not quite so much, as by that time my mind was exhausted." Although he admitted "it were temerity indeed to attempt any criticism on this most valuable work I having only read the first 140 pages", he took issue with Thomas Reid on the closely related concept of "imagination" all the same:

I cannot exactly coincide with him that imagining a thing without my having a present belief of its existence in my mind – and 'tis from this that we say you have imagined a thing when we wish to say, you have thought that something existed or really took place which really never did so.<sup>37</sup>

Irvine was not simply interested in learning about and understanding the philosophical works of the Scottish Enlightenment, then, he was also eager to engage with the philosophers on their own ground, assessing their theories as they fitted with his own observations and adjusting them accordingly. More importantly, he also attempted to integrate philosophical lessons into the way he lived his life, self-consciously following Reid's "peculiarly just and acute" notion that "the direct intention of morals is to teach the duty of man".<sup>38</sup> For Irvine, this entailed the collection of the same conduct models and behavioural maxims that preoccupied so many other contemporary readers, such as Adam Smith's "very good distinction between pride and vanity":

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., diary entries 16 and 20 December, 1802; for the "Runnymede" example, cf. Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Dublin, 1790), 15.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., entry for 28 December 1802; Irvine appears to take issue with a passage at Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (Edinburgh, 1764), 83.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., entry dated 5 January 1803; this is a direct quotation from Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 1788), 387.

The proud man really believes himself possessed of those talents which he so far overrates. The vain man on the contrary endeavours to assume a character he very well knows he does not possess.<sup>39</sup>

Yet Irvine also grappled intensively with some of the most characteristic themes of Scottish Enlightenment moral discourse, attempting to relate them directly to his moral character and the moral judgments he was required to make every day. He implied, for instance, that he was not terribly impressed by Francis Hutcheson's use of the "moral sense", but nevertheless considered how it related to his own circumstances:

Dr Hutchisons work on the distinction mankind make by the moral sense between virtue & vice, I read so very discursively that I am afraid I reaped little advantage from the small part of it I have gone over. I imagine everyone on examining his own breast will allow that there is a principle within us which leads us to approve of one action & condemn another, and this so instantaneously that there is no room for the cool determination of the judgement. I meet a man beating another on the street – I am prompted to take part with the suffered, before I have thought that perhaps he may have been insolent and deserving this treatment. The judgement in this case is directly opposite to the sensation.<sup>40</sup>

Irvine was demonstrably more taken by Dugald Stewart's "observation...that by suppressing the outward signs of the passions we come to command the passions themselves", writing eagerly that it "merits great attention & I intend from the beginning of next year marking & comparing my conduct in this respect".<sup>41</sup> Irvine evidently thought carefully about the undue influence of the passions on his conduct and on the very next day he can be found upbraiding himself for

many acts of petulance to Mr Snodgrass & concerning him. Although he may not be a man of talents, yet he ought to be treated with great respect and not irritated, no one ever forgives contempt, besides 'tis a disagreeable feeling to oneself & serves to embitter a society in which we must be very much together.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., entry dated 7 October 1802; cf. Smith, *TMS*, 255–62.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., entry dated 16 February 1801; it is not entirely clear which particular book Irvine has in mind here, as he simply states that he has got hold of a "French Translation of Dr Hutchisons work".

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., entry dated 22 December 1800; cf. Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1793), 236.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., entry dated 23 December 1800.

Two weeks later, he fulfilled his self-improving pledge to assess his conduct at the start of each year, relieved to find that he was indeed

a man of moderate passions – and of a good deal of ardour & perseverance in the pursuits of literature, but I imagine the contempt I often shew for the opinion of others & the rudeness & incivility I often make use of to people who may no doubt be deficient in talents but are still instilled to civility – are defects in my characters.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, he determined to improve his behaviour by “avoiding altercations & behaving with civility & politeness to everybody whatever their talents or abilities maybe”, whilst scolding himself once again “to avoid general reflections as against manufacturers or the town of Glasgow”. These intimate personal reflections came in the immediate aftermath of reading Stewart on the passions, of course, but it is also clear that Irvine kept such sentiments in mind throughout the period covered by the diary. On a much later occasion, he was interrupted in reading Ferguson’s *Institutes* (“a book which for beauty of expression, happiness of illustration and logical reasoning I have seldom or never found equalled”) by his brother’s arrival from Aberdeen with an account of the family’s dire financial straits. Charged with a degree of culpability for the impending crisis, Irvine made a dramatic, if rather confused, confession to his journal:

But worst of all I this day have to regret my want of temper which I cannot recollect to have so much failed me at any time as this evening. I cannot too often recollect that benevolence as pleasure and the passions and expressions of hatred revenge etc. are pain so that even on my own account I ought to beware of any *perturbations* of this nature, but still more for the sake of those who are about me, indeed I must do myself the justice to add that I believe few men in common have a greater command of their passions than I possess.<sup>44</sup>

As if to confirm the influence of his philosophical reading on such episodes of intense self-reflection, on this occasion Irvine turned immediately back to his books for reassurance and support:

On opening Mr Ferguson again, the following passage occurred which I shall transcribe as something to the purpose: “Thus the passions abate of their perturbations and tumult, under a continuance of their occasions

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., entry dated 11 January 1801.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., entry dated 6 January 1804 (Irvine’s emphasis).

while the mind attains to a full possession of its faculties, in discharging the functions, in aid of which the passions may at first to have been given".<sup>45</sup>

### III

Although it is rare indeed that we can trace so fully the direct influence of reading on the values, thought processes and habits of mind of historical readers, Irvine's "literary journal" does illustrate once again the extent to which diarising – and the closely related practice of common-placing – evolved in the eighteenth century. The cult of politeness encouraged readers to hope to achieve more than simple aphoristic rote copying, with the result that we can often reconstruct the roles played by books in their lives from the textual or biographical priorities inherent in their note-taking strategies. A particularly coherent strategy was developed by Elizabeth Rose, lady laird of Kilravock, directly in response to changes in her personal circumstances in the 1780s. Elizabeth's husband had died in 1780 during her pregnancy, scarcely a year after their marriage, leaving her to bring up their son alone. In a poem she composed at the end of 1788, "an infant son to truth engage" is clearly identified as the central ambition of her reading life and her surviving books of extracts from this same period reflected a close study of books which she hoped might help her effect her son Hugh's moral education.<sup>46</sup> Her sole extract from Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, for example, deals explicitly with the problem at hand: "Domestic education is the institution of nature, public education the contrivance of man. – It is surely unnecessary to say which is likely to be the wisest".<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth's preference for a domestic education was soon confirmed in reading Beattie's *Elements of Moral Science*. Again, the solitary extract she took from this multi-volume classic of Common Sense philosophy addressed directly the question, "whether a public school or the privacy of domestic education be preferable", and argued

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., entry dated 7 January 1804; the passage is actually taken from Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science; being chiefly a retrospect of lectures delivered in the college of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1792), 230.

<sup>46</sup> Hugh Rose and Lachlan Shaw, *A Genealogical Deduction of the Family of Rose of Kilravock 1290–1847*, ed. Cosmo Innes (Edinburgh, 1848), 509; Towsey, "An Infant Son".

<sup>47</sup> NAS GD1/726/8, Extracts made by Elizabeth Rose from her Reading, 1790 (hereafter Rose Extracts, 1790), 29; cf. Smith, *TMS*, 222.

against the moral degradations inherent in the former. In this case, she concluded by uncharacteristically adding her own gloss that “the above opinion of Dr Beattie on the subject of education coincides with Dr. Smith vide p. 29 of this Book”.<sup>48</sup>

In between these two complementary readings of Smith and Beattie, Elizabeth had evidently spent many hours in close study of another major Scottish treatment of education – what amounted to a natural history of education by Dugald Stewart. At first, she seems only to have intended to transcribe another brief excerpt from Stewart’s *Elements of the Human Mind*, “Chapt 6 On the Memory”, this time on a common “defect in early education” where books and learning are introduced too soon:

In such instances the...best of all educations is lost, which Nature has prepared both for the Philosopher & the Man of the World amidst the active sports & Hazardous adventures of Childhood.<sup>49</sup>

Reading on, however, she clearly could not resist taking on a much more extensive study of Stewart’s system of education, as more than ten pages of densely packed notes followed, all closely related to Elizabeth’s own circumstances and preoccupations. She must particularly have agreed with Stewart’s advice that “if the business of early Education were more thoroughly & more generally understood it would be less necessary for individuals when they arrive at maturity to form plans of improvement for themselves”. Stewart’s discussion of the qualities required of those charged with the supervision of a child’s education, moreover, may well have contributed to her decision to take personal responsibility for “teaching and attending Hughie”.<sup>50</sup>

In effect, then, Elizabeth Rose distilled one of the foremost philosophical texts of the late Enlightenment into a highly pragmatic manual on domestic education, but even more generalist readings contributed to Elizabeth’s burgeoning understanding of the problems inherent in effecting her son’s moral education. For instance, Samuel Johnson’s *Journey to the Western Isles*, a work less admired in Scotland than elsewhere, also furnished material for Elizabeth’s collection of readings on education. Her notes in the mid-1790s afforded pride of place to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 157; cf. James Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science* (Edinburgh, 1790–1793), 2: 146–8.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 81–2; cf. Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 463, 486.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 83–8; cf. Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 23–4; 39. References to Elizabeth’s role in educating her son abound in NAS GD1/726/1, Journal of Elizabeth Rose.

Johnson's account of the academic suitability of Scotland's oldest university town:

St Andrews seems to be a Place eminently adapted to study and Education being situated in a Populous yet a cheap country, & exposing the minds & manners of young men neither to the levity & dissoluteness of a capital city, nor to the gross lluxury [sic] of a town of commerce, Places naturally unpropitious to learning, in one the desire of knowledge easily gives way to the love of pleasure, & in the other in danger of yielding to the love of money.<sup>51</sup>

Elizabeth Rose's notes from Smith, Beattie, Johnson and especially Stewart (all entered in the same commonplace book) show that from 1790 her studies focused expressly and systematically on contemporary theories of education, reflecting her belief that "private life" was indeed "the proper school of virtue", as the Scots *literati* had argued.<sup>52</sup> This may in turn have reflected her earlier assimilation of contemporary texts on the role of women in domestic education. Kames, for instance, argued explicitly that "the dignified occupation of educating their children would be their most charming amusement", and we know that Kames's *On Education* was one of the first books Elizabeth encountered after the enforced break in her reading caused by her bereavement and difficult pregnancy.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Elizabeth's close attention to the education of her son was also entirely consistent with the priorities of other women readers in Georgian Britain. Amanda Vickery argues that "mothers took seriously their role as educators", whilst Londoner Anna Larpent "set aside 'stated times for regular study even in infancy'; and devised a rigorous programme of domestic reading for her yawning young sons".<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth's reading of these key texts, however surprising to the modern scholar familiar with the formidable legacy of a Johnson, a Smith or a Stewart, may actually have been characteristic of female readers who were preoccupied with the upbringing and appropriate education of their children.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 151; cf. Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775; London, 1984), 38.

<sup>52</sup> Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 100.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted by Marshall, *Virgins and Viragos*, 209. Elizabeth's reading of Kames is recorded in NAS GD1/726/1, though no reading notes survive. In November 1780 she writes "Dr Rose's Death happened & deprived Me of Spirit or health to renew My Studies till July 1781"; see Mackenzie's *Letters*, 240.

<sup>54</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 113–4.

## IV

The underlying agenda of such strategies was often devotional and many contemporary Scots read the more conservative works of the Enlightenment for religious consolation and spiritual support. Elizabeth was herself particularly attracted to extracts that related directly to the religious education of children. From Beattie's poignant biography of his own son, James Hay Beattie, she extracted the very passage in which Beattie explained the reasoning behind his decision to introduce his son to "the doctrines of religion" for the first time at the age of six, describing the mind experiment he constructed to suggest to him "the great & first principle of all religion – the being of a God".<sup>55</sup> Her educational notes from Stewart's *Elements* had a similarly spiritual theme, as in this passage, which was also transcribed by the childless spinster Stephana Malcolm presumably with the education of her nephews and nieces in mind:

If the first conceptions...which an infant formed of the Deity & its first Moral perceptions were associated with the early impressions produced on the Heart by the beauties of nature, or the charms of Poetical description, those serious thoughts which are resorted to by most Men merely as a source of consolation in adversity & which on that very account are frequently tinged with some degree of gloom, would recur spontaneously to the mind, in its best & happiest hours & would insensibly blend themselves with all its purest & most refined enjoyments.<sup>56</sup>

Eliza Macpherson's reading often had a rather more urgent motivation, copying material from James Beattie and Hugh Blair she thought perfectly suited to consolidate the emotional and spiritual development of her newly-married daughter.<sup>57</sup> Soon after Harriet had left the family home in Blairgowrie, Perthshire, for her new life in London, Eliza started writing her long letters packed with extracts from books in large part, no doubt, as a way of controlling her daughter's ongoing moral education. In one of the first letters in the series, she wrote advising Harriet on the appropriate relationship that should be cultivated

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<sup>55</sup> Rose Extracts, 1790, 163; cf., James Beattie, *Essays and Fragments in Prose and Verse. By James Hay Beattie. To which is prefixed an account of the author's life and character* (Edinburgh, 1794), 11.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 87–8; cf. Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 41; see also NLS Acc.6684/28, Historical, Literary and Religious Pieces, unpaginated.

<sup>57</sup> The same authors combined to frame many English readers' spiritual sensibilities; see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 172–3.

between man and wife, enlisting “Dr Blair’s XIV Sermon in Vol. III” to illustrate “how dangerous it is, to be too pliant, and not having a determined will of our own”.<sup>58</sup> Blair again came in useful in discussing the behaviour of a “young friend” over whom mother and daughter had evidently quarrelled. “I am sure from your inference you wish her conduct should have appeared to you more dignified”, Eliza wrote to her daughter, encouraging her to set aside any offence caused: “as the Revd Blair says, we view things as in a glass darkly, that is, our light is always clearer for discovering failings in others than with ourselves, and from this proceeds arguments for those we love forgetting ourselves”.<sup>59</sup>

Eliza Macpherson thereby found the works of Enlightenment moralists useful in helping her daughter cope with difficult emotional problems, but her letters are also significant because they reveal the extent to which books served to reaffirm readers’ most deeply held beliefs. Nowhere was this more evident than when Harriet’s relationship with her husband had deteriorated to breaking point. Brimming with motherly sympathy, Eliza urged her daughter to find solace in the reassuring arguments of another of the Scottish Enlightenment’s most comforting moralists: “Let me say my truly beloved Harriet, keep God in view, for the purest bliss, and as Dr Beattie says, Truth, an intuitive principle in soul, fixed from God Himself, to make us happy in spite of ourselves”.<sup>60</sup>

There were a number of more obvious contexts in which the eminently orthodox Christian morality offered by the Scots *literati* was used to help readers overcome emotional obstacles, not least the sorrow of losing loved ones. Jane Elizabeth Mary Campbell of Ardchattan Priory, Argyllshire, was just one of many contemporary readers to transcribe long passages from Hugh Blair’s sermon “On the Benefits to be Derived from the House of Mourning”, while she also took down a particularly moving passage from his sermon “On the Happiness of a Future State”:

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<sup>58</sup> NRAS2614, Bundle 69, Eliza Macpherson to Harriet Macintyre, February 1808; cf. Blair, *Sermons*, 3: 286–305. For Scottish advice on marriage, see Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 109.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 September 1809; this seems to refer to Blair’s sermon “On Candour”, *Sermons*, 2: 291–2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 October 1809; Macpherson seems to refer generally to James Beattie’s *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth; in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* (Edinburgh, 1770), rather to any specific passage.



Of all the sorrows which we are here doomed to endure, none is so bitter as that occasioned by the fatal stroke which separates us in appearance, forever from those to whom either nature or friendship had intimately joined our hearts. Memory, from time to time renews the anguish, opens the wound which seemed once to have been closed, and, by recalling joys that are past and gone, touches every spring of painful sensibility. On those agonising moments, how relieving the thought, that the separation is only temporary not eternal, that there is a time to come of reunion with those with whom our happiest days were spent, whose joys and sorrows once were ours, and from whom, after we shall have landed on the peaceful shore, where they dwell, no revolutions of nature *shall ever be able to part us more*.<sup>61</sup>

Elizabeth Rose turned to a rather more unusual source for advice on coping with the scene of suffering and loss, the Moderate clergyman John Farquhar whose morally uplifting sermons had been published posthumously in 1772:

The hard hearted alone are ignorant how far attention, compassion, seasonable advice, & kind words can go to alleviate many of our sorrows & our sufferings. The tear that mingles w<sup>t</sup> mine as it falls its value cannot be reckoned in gold or silver, the affection I perceive in my friend when my heart is overwhelm<sup>d</sup>, if I could compare it w<sup>t</sup> the idol of the interested, let my heart never perceive it again.<sup>62</sup>

In extracting such passages, Elizabeth hoped to come better to terms with her own losses, perhaps to minimise what she called elsewhere “their depredations on domestic delight”, so that her deeply felt grief would not compromise her virtuous emotions and plunge her into an orgy of uncontrolled self-pity.<sup>63</sup> But there was also a more urgent requirement, for at about the time she encountered Farquhar, her close friends the Russell sisters of Earlsmill lost their beloved father. This particular passage could therefore have helped her to cultivate the sympathetic fellow feeling required to console and uplift her closest

<sup>61</sup> NRAS 934, Volume 56, Extracts of Prose and Verse from Various Authors, 14–5 (Campbell’s emphasis); cf. Blair, *Sermons*, 2: 366–403; 254–5. On the importance of Blair’s “On the Benefits to be Derived from the House of Mourning”, see Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Rose Extracts, 1775, 166; cf. John Farquhar, *Sermons on various subjects* (London, 1772), Sermon XX, 433–4, 444; ODNB.

<sup>63</sup> St Clair observes that female commonplace books of the Romantic period tend to “emit a sense of loss, of parting, of wasted youth, of hopeless love, death of friends. Separation, loneliness and loss were the real experiences of many women, whether unmarried, married or widows”; *Reading Nation*, 228.

friends at their time of grief – hence her earnest pledge “to soften for a moment the weight of their affliction”.<sup>64</sup>

While devotional books helped some contemporary readers overcome emotional heartache, the link forged by the Scottish *literati* between Enlightenment and faith was, for others, inherently vocational. Scottish clergymen of every denomination plundered philosophical and moralistic books for materials for sermons, collecting pertinent sayings and truisms which might eventually help propagate further the core values and beliefs of the Enlightenment. The Anti-Burgher minister George Lawson, who was such a prodigious borrower from the Selkirk Subscription Library, drafted a note on the “evidence of memory” that seems to have been inspired by reading a passage in Reid’s *Intellectual Powers* “concerning memory”, including the life-affirming observation that:

It is owing to this faculty...that the happiness of man is not confined to the short-lived pleasure of the passing moment... Through the mind of the virtuous it always diffuses that calm tranquillity, which flows from a consciousness of rectitude and integrity of heart.<sup>65</sup>

The Rev. John Grant, Church of Scotland minister of Dundurcus and another very keen commonplacer, noted a passage from David Fordyce’s *Elements of Moral Philosophy* that he might readily have used to commend the act of reading itself to his congregation:

The intellectual virtues are best improved by accurate & impartial observation, extensive reading, & unconfined converse with men of all characters, especially with those who, to private study, have joined the widest acquaintance with the world & greatest practice in affairs, but above all, by being much in the world, and having large dealings with mankind. Such opportunities contribute much to divest one of prejudices & a servile attachment to crude systems, to open one’s views and to give that experience on which the most useful, because the most practical knowledge is built & from which the surest maxims for the construct of life are deduced.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in *Genealogical Deduction*, 492; see Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, especially 59–60. For similar reading strategies developed by young women in colonial America, see N. C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture 1680–1760* (New York, 1997), 54, 134–9.

<sup>65</sup> NLS Acc. 5115/104, George Lawson, On the Evidence of Memory, 5; some elements of Lawson’s text follow closely the terms of Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, 419.

<sup>66</sup> NAS GD248/614/1, Commonplace Book of Rev. John Grant of Dundurcus and Elgin, f30r; cf. David Fordyce, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1754), 133.

Bishop Alexander Jolly, meanwhile, crossed the sectarian divide to raid the published sermons of a number of Presbyterian clergymen for memorable aphorisms and effortlessly polite pieties. From Hugh Blair, for instance, he took down a note explaining that man's "natural vigour & courage" would enable "him to surmount the ordinary distresses of life, to bear with patience poverty, sickness or pain, as long as he is conscious that all is right & sound within".<sup>67</sup> Such passages no doubt came in useful as Jolly ministered to the mental and physical well-being of his flock, but more morally loaded advice was forthcoming on the role of conscience in governing personal accountability – "a secret feeling of propriety, a sense of right & wrong in conduct" that lies "at the bottom of the hearts of most men, even amidst an irregular life". From Blair came the reproach that "though conscience be not strong enough to guide, it still has strength to dart a sting", while Alexander Gerard's *Sermons* provided the stern warning that "one act of gross sin committed, you will experience a wretched change in the state of your mind: your innocence is lost; your conscience is wounded; your peace is gone... A moment may forfeit your innocence; but then it is irrecoverable forever".<sup>68</sup>

As well as Scottish clergymen appropriating material for their own sermons, certain books also helped them to consider how to draft and deliver those sermons in an affecting manner. William Cameron turned to Beattie's *Dissertations* for advice on how to compose sermons:

To facilitate the mandating of sermons, a competence of theological learning is necessary, also a knowledge of their language and sentiment. Passages of holy writ are the most valuable parts of a sermon when properly connected & judiciously chosen.<sup>69</sup>

Ironically, David Hume also provided thought-provoking advice on the delivery of sermons, with Cameron's extracts from the essay "Of Eloquence" by far his longest and most detailed notes from Hume's *Essays and Treatises*. Cameron's own experience no doubt had taught

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<sup>67</sup> NAS CH12/32/41, Miscellaneous Extracts of Bishop Alexander Jolly, 1–2; cf. Blair, *Sermons*, 5: 72–3.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 2, 4; cf. Blair, *Sermons*, 5: 280–1; cf. Alexander Gerard, *Sermons* (London, 1780–1782), 2: 92.

<sup>69</sup> NAS CH1/12/3, Commonplace Book of William Cameron (hereafter Cameron Commonplace Book), ff29r–29v; cf., James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical. On Memory and Imagination. On Dreaming. The Theory of Language. On fable and Romance* (London, 1783), 47. Scottish Enlightenment dictates on pulpit eloquence are discussed in Sher, *Church and University*, 168–86.

him that “plain sense & logical argument properly expressed...is not suited to a popular audience”, and that “good sense, a lively imagination, self-command, an ardent zeal with the natural expression of an expert speaker tho’ not the most correct qualify much better for addressing a promiscuous multitude”. To Hume’s argument that “tho a laboured style of language in oratory is not to be too minutely studied, yet method & order in argument is to be attended to as of essential importance”, Cameron added his own reflection that “If the memory cannot command this exactly it may be assisted by a few notes which will relieve fear & anxiety which tend so fatally to damp the spirit of the orator”. Indeed, Cameron seemed particularly eager to prove himself a critical reader on this point, adding the further note, based on his own experience, that “almost daily practice in his art is necessary to finish the orator & it requires him to speak some considerable time before he can reach the proper pitch & key of true eloquence”.<sup>70</sup>

## V

If Cameron used Scottish books on taste and the *belles lettres* pragmatically for advice on pulpit eloquence, his commonplace book often resembled a manual for cultivating his own burgeoning literary talents. Cameron, who published a number of poems in the 1780s and 1790s,<sup>71</sup> compiled fulsome notes from Gerard’s *Essay on Genius* on the relationship between genius and the imagination:

A man may have taste, judgement, learning but without invention is not a man of genius – On this acc<sup>t</sup> Shakespeare is a greater Genius than Milton – Socrates, Aristotle & Bacon great original geniuses. Newton only improv<sup>d</sup> upon the plan th<sup>t</sup> Bacon chalked out. The former was of most acute the latter the most comprehensive Genius.<sup>72</sup>

Cameron’s notes leaned heavily on literary examples and featured extensive biographical notes plundered from Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of*

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., ff75r–75v; summarised and adapted from Hume, *Essays*, 98 and 109. On Hume’s Essay “Of Eloquence”, see Adam Potkay, “David Hume (1711–1776)”, in M. G. Moran (ed.), *Eighteenth-century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians* (Westport, CT, 1994), 124–7.

<sup>71</sup> William Cameron, *Poems on Various Occasions* (Edinburgh, 1780); idem., *Poetical Dialogues on Religion in the Scots Dialect, between two gentlemen and two ploughmen* (Edinburgh, 1788); idem., *Ode on Lochiel’s Birthday, 1796* (Edinburgh, 1796).

<sup>72</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, ff16v–17r; cf., Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius* (London, 1774), 8–19, 36–9. See Berry, *Social Theory*, 175–7, 184.

*the English Poets* (1781), Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* (1774) and Daniel Webb's *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry* (1762). These not only contributed to Cameron's attempt to fashion a poetic identity, but also helped him to cultivate critical taste as a reader by exposing him to the canonical pantheon of English literature – exactly as the Enlightenment belletrists had intended.<sup>73</sup>

Cameron also sought help in this regard from Hume's *Essays*, with his notes from Hume's discussion of "the Delicacy of Taste and Passion" reflecting both his sensitivity to advice on reading and his special interest in the workings of taste as an aspiring poet. He first summarised Hume's key terms to establish the parameters of the argument: "Delicacy of Taste is a desirable accomplishment & production of refin<sup>d</sup> and exquisite pleasure. Delicacy of passion is a misfortune & production of more pain than pleasure as the more common incidents of life are too gross & unsatisfactory to yield pure delight". Then, in just a few lines he distilled Hume's prescription for good taste, crucially in his own words:

A man of refined taste & improved understanding must lay his account with meeting few persons & few incidents in life that can yield him pleasure without a mixture of base alloy. This will serve to guard him against the pain of disappointment & to blunt his too refin<sup>d</sup> delicacy of passions so as to make him more indifferent with regard to such objects.<sup>74</sup>

Readers did not necessarily have to harbour poetical ambitions of their own to take to heart the writings of the Scottish Enlightenment on taste; rather, they seem to have used this material to help guide their engagement with literature on a less ambitious level. Once again, on first contact many readers compiled extensive digests of the key terms of rhetoric and *belles lettres*, their notes often devolving on the crucial matter of good literary taste and its constituent linguistic components. Paymaster Douglas compiled a huge collection of notes from George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, using Campbell to build up a definition of key terms like "purity" and "perspicuity", before progressing to tackle Campbell's thoughts on how they came into play in the canonical classics of English literature.<sup>75</sup> From Beattie's *Essays on Poetry and*

<sup>73</sup> On the cultivation of taste, see Berry, 174–80; J. Flynn, "Scottish Aesthetics and the Search for a Standard of Taste", *Dalhousie Review*, 60 (1980), 5–19.

<sup>74</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, f72v; summarised from Hume, *Essays*, 3–8.

<sup>75</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol 2, ff213r–220v; cf., George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London, 1776), ix. On Scottish rhetoric, see P. G. Bator,

*Music* too, Douglas compiled plentiful notes on important features of English composition, including “hyperbole” and “the pathetic”,<sup>76</sup> while he noted down the chapter headings of Archibald Alison’s *Essays on Taste* as the most convenient way of familiarising himself with the broad contours of this popular late interpretation of the topic. For his introduction to the nature and qualities of taste, the nurseryman Drummond turned to Dugald Stewart, although he took a rather less effective approach – his unpunctuated extract somewhat mincing the sense of Stewart’s original argument:

Taste is not a gift of nature it is an a[c]quired habit of judgement different from sensibility susceptible of improvement from cultivation habit diminishes our impressions in their acuteness, In the objects of taste presented to the mind by seeing, besides the variety of circumstances conspiring to give the effect to which we give the name of beauty what numerous charms do they not receive from moral associations, the pleasing emotion heightened perhaps by sound at the same time, seems simple and uncompounded to our judgements.<sup>77</sup>

With the key terms thus digested (however ineffectively), readers usually trawled books on taste for specific guidance on how particular genres should be read. Drummond, for instance, paid particularly close attention to Beattie’s account of the various forms of poetry, noting that “Tragedy gives pleasure by inspiring pity and imaginary terrors, & other elevated emotions, and comedy by displaying the follies of mankind in such a light as to provoke contempt and laughter”. While his notes revealed what he should expect to gain from reading tragedy, comedy, epic poetry, satire and lyric poetry, he also learned about some of the more pragmatic considerations in reading poetry – not least, he noted in his own words that

Poetry is very useful for furnishing us with a genteel and elegant variety of language in conversation as it consists all the best expressions in the English language for writers of poetry have to search often for words

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“The Unpublished Rhetoric Lectures of Robert Watson, Professor of Logic, Rhetoric, and Metaphysics at the University of St. Andrews, 1756–1778”, *Rhetorica*, 12 (1994–1995); T. Miller, *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Culture Provinces* (Pittsburgh, 1997); Moran (ed.), *Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*. On Campbell specifically, see J. M. Suderman, *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: George Campbell in the Eighteenth Century* (Montreal and Kingston, Ont., 2001).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., f129v; cf., Beattie, *Essays*, 364.

<sup>77</sup> Drummond Commonplace Book, f55r; this extract seems to derive from Dugald Stewart, *Philosophical Essays* (Edinburgh, 1810), 410–24.

adapted the measure and metre which otherwise would not have occurred to them.<sup>78</sup>

Elizabeth Rose also used books for detailed advice on how to read different literary genres. In one particularly significant moment of close reflection, she took down extracts from Dugald Stewart which contrasted the moral capacities of histories, poetry and novels. The fate of personalities in history, she noted, “should direct attention to those sacred & indelible characters on the human mind”, justifying her fascination with historical character studies sketched out by Hume and Robertson. “The imagination of the poet”, she continued immediately, neatly excising well over one hundred pages of Stewart’s original text she considered irrelevant to the task in hand,

almost always carries him beyond truth & nature, a familiarity with the Tragic scenes which he exhibits can hardly fail to deaden the impression produced by the comparatively trifling sufferings which the ordinary course of human affairs presents to us.<sup>79</sup>

With such encouragement, poetic transcriptions sat uncomfortably alongside Moderate sermons in her attempt to cultivate appropriate responses to sorrow and loss – including the conclusion of the supposed Ossianic fragment “Cuthon the son of Dargo” which summed up the catalogue of losses Elizabeth herself had suffered in her youth: “My friends are gone: their memory like the stones of their tomb is half sunk & the place of their abode is desolate but such changes are not the lot of the Bard alone”.<sup>80</sup>

Most dramatically, however, Elizabeth devoted inordinate attention to Stewart’s ruminations on the dangers inherent in reading novels, a particular bugbear of eighteenth-century moralists which Elizabeth noted were “in every view calculated to check our moral improvement”:

The scenes into which the novelist introduces us are, in general, perfectly unlike those which occur in the world. As his object is to please, he removes from his work every circumstance which is disgusting & presents us with histories of elegant & dignified distress. It is not such scenes that human life exhibits. We have to act, not with refined & elevated character,

<sup>78</sup> Drummond Commonplace Book, f9r–v; cf. James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (London, 1783), 180–1.

<sup>79</sup> Rose Extracts, 1790, 89–90; cf., Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 519–20.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 158–9; cf. John Smith, *Gaelic Antiquities; consisting of a history of the Druids, Dissertation on the poems of Ossian, and Ancient Poems* (Edinburgh, 1780), 309–12.

but with the mean, the illiterate, the vulgar, & the profligate. The perusal of fictitious history has a tendency to increase that disgust which we naturally feel at the concomitants of distress, & to cultivate a false refinement of taste inconsistent with our own condition as members of society. Nay, it is possible for this refinement to be carried so far, as to withdraw a man from the duties of life & even from the sight of those distresses which he might alleviate. And accordingly many are to be found, who, if the situations of Romance were realized, would not fail to display the virtue of their favourite characters, whose sense of duty is not sufficiently strong to engage them in the humble & private scenes of human misery.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps for the very reasons outlined in passages like this, Elizabeth entered very few extracts from novels into her early commonplace books, preferring instead to exercise her sympathetic instincts instead on historical subjects. But as she came to develop more confidence in her own critical judgement, she seems to have started to put more trust in Stewart's caveat

that by means of fictitious history, displays of character may be most successfully given & the various weaknesses of the heart exposed; I only meant to insinuate that a taste for them may be carried too far.

By the time she started her last commonplace book in 1806, Elizabeth had clearly reconciled herself to what Stewart termed "their tendency to cultivate the powers of moral perception",<sup>82</sup> collecting an extensive – but highly selective – range of conduct models for young ladies from an unprecedented number of recently published novels. With its focus largely on female *exempla* hardly appropriate or apposite for a widow in her 60s, this last notebook was probably compiled with the moral guidance of her granddaughters in mind, intended to inculcate in them the conservative moral virtues Elizabeth herself favoured. She may also have intended to help her granddaughters develop appropriate reading habits, hoping to prevent them submitting to the perceived moral dangers of reading by showing them how, when treated with due care and critical judgement, novels could "effectually advance our moral improvement".<sup>83</sup> In this way, Elizabeth Rose's notebooks can themselves be considered a form of literary composition, intended to be passed

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 89–90; cf., Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 519–20. On novels, see Pearson, *Women's Reading*, 49–51, 163–8.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 92; cf. Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 560.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 92; cf. Stewart, *Elements*, 1: 560. See Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 142.



down to her granddaughters as a compilation of safely virtuous and devotional readings, pre-censured by their devoted grandmother for their edification, personal enlightenment and proper moral development. Hence the direct appeal to the reader in an extract Elizabeth Rose transcribed from Rachel Hunter's *Letitia* (1801) – “observe her heedfully, you will be well taught”.<sup>84</sup>

Books on taste ultimately allowed Elizabeth Rose to develop the intellectual confidence to intervene as a critic in manipulating the responses of less dexterous readers in her immediate circle. More commonly, they provided other readers with the critical tools to engage their textual authorities on their own terms, sitting in critical judgement on the works of the Scottish Enlightenment. Nowhere was this exercise more transparently performed than in the commonplace books of Paymaster Douglas, who as we have seen was a diligent student of books on taste by George Campbell and James Beattie, amongst very many others. Douglas transcribed large chunks of John Home's *Alonzo* into his commonplace with the express purpose of assessing it “in the mercantile stile...Creditor & Debtor”. Thus in the margins of his abridgement of *Alonzo*, he precociously entered critical commentary of his own devising in a different colour of ink:

*From the colour of the dawn, he foretold the brightness of the day* – The beauty of the expression is hurt by the vanity of the application  
*Mrs Barry: Reached the Summit of Perfection* – An instance how exaggeration diminishes affected strength  
*Like Eastern Princes in this House you sit* – Good  
*Our Heroines smile on you with all their might* – very low  
*Should you but frown, even brave Alonzo flies* – A tolerable point  
*Oh my dear Teresa! ... The fairest side of things* – Very tender  
*Grief and care...who dress the Queen of love in wanton smiles* – Excellent painting, descriptive  
*But suddenly a troop of Spaniards came* – Here is a lean, poverty of plot – miracles & accidents improbably are the stinking platters of poetic genius  
*The deserts vast/ of Asia and Africa have heard it* – This flight is ridiculous – has desert ears?  
*When sore affliction comes...and strips it bear of all its leaves* – The comparison is just & beautifully melancholy.

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<sup>84</sup> NAS GD1/726/9, Extracts made by Elizabeth Rose from her Reading, 1806, 139; taken from Rachel Hunter, *Letitia; or, the Castle without a Spectre* (London, 1801), 3: 176; Towsey, “Observe her Heedfully”.

*Alonzo, fighting in my cause...against the foes of Spain* – The noble motive is nobly expressed<sup>85</sup>

In this way, Douglas deployed the fruits of reading Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Beattie's *Essays on Poetry* in analysing the linguistic merits and faults of the play, since he acknowledged in another apothegm culled from his reading that "Criticism is a profitable exercise of the judgement when it is equally investigating beauties and blemishes".<sup>86</sup> By exercising his critical talents in such a self-conscious manner, our paymaster was more firmly entrenching his independent judgement and refinement as a reader – and more thoroughly consolidating his enlightened identity.

## VI

History books naturally provoked critical opinions of a more worldly nature, not simply encouraging readers to learn from the mistakes and triumphs of their historical *exempla* but also challenging them to rationalise momentous events in the world around them. Readers frequently read histories autobiographically, relating sometimes distant historical events to contemporary happenings with which they were associated or in which they had a special interest. Following a note taken from Hume's *History* to the effect that Strafford "defends himself with ability innocent of high treason", for instance, the teenage law student David Boyle of Sherralton commented in brackets that "the commons proceeded against him in the same way as they are now managing Hastings[s] trial" – apparently with his chosen vocation already uppermost in his thoughts, and perhaps with the newspaper accounts of one of the most celebrated trials of the age open in front of him.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol 2, ff46v–48r; cf., John Home, *Alonzo: A Tragedy* (London, 1773), iii–v, 11, 13, 18, 37, 47–8 (original transcribed by Douglas in italics here).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.; I have not identified where this apothegm may have come from, and it may well have been Douglas's own phrase.

<sup>87</sup> GUL Ms Murray 170, Notebook of David Boyle of Sherralton (hereafter, Boyle Notebook), 17; commenting on Hume, *History*, 314; cf. G. Carnall and C. Nicholson (eds.), *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Edinburgh, 1989). Boyle studied law under John Millar at Glasgow, and was called to the Scottish bar on 14 December 1793; ODNB.

Perhaps the most striking autobiographical reader of history was David Murray (1727–1796), 2nd Earl of Mansfield, who had already served as the British ambassador to Dresden, Warsaw, Vienna and Paris when he came across Watson's *Philip II*, perhaps soon after its publication in 1777. As the leading British diplomat of his generation, Murray had the ear of George III and was one of Scotland's sixteen representative peers. In Paris, he worked hard to delay the breakdown in diplomatic relations that led to war in 1778 as the French came to the assistance of the American colonial rebels, and when back in London served as *de facto* foreign secretary at a crucial juncture in the American War of Independence.<sup>88</sup>

Murray's conscientious notes from Watson's *Philip II* were clearly compiled with this potent context uppermost in his mind, allowing him to understand further the controversies that had provoked the American Revolution. For instance, he highlighted the Duke of Alva's tyrannical stewardship of the Netherlands with British rule of the colonies clearly in mind: Dutch "commerce was almost entirely ruined...by [Alva's] neglecting to provide a naval force to oppose the exiles at sea", whereas the series of taxes imposed on the colonies by the British Parliament through the 1760s and early 1770s had been intended explicitly to finance their defence against French and native American aggressors.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, in transcribing Watson's account of the "assistance in money given the states by Queen Elizabeth" in 1576, he underlined Elizabeth's insistence that they should "*not throw off their allegiance to their legal sovereign*" – with the obvious implication that however unhappy the American colonists had been, they should not have thrown off their own constitutional relationship with Britain. Indeed, this particular note may even have been compiled by Murray with French military support for the colonists very much in mind – perhaps to be deployed in his diplomatic wranglings with the French.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, Murray took direct issue with Watson's "very inaccurate" portrayal of the Treaty of Utrecht as a prototype Declaration of

<sup>88</sup> ODNB. On Mansfield's contribution to British foreign policy, see H. M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford, 1990).

<sup>89</sup> NRAS 776, Volume 811, Historical notes on the Reign of Philip II of Spain, 1–2; cf., Robert Watson, *The History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain* (London, 1777), 1: 392. Mansfield extracted Watson's exact phrase, that Alva's government "had thrown it [the Netherlands] into the most terrible combustion and kindled the flames of a destructive war".

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (Murray's emphasis); cf., Watson, *Philip II*, 2: 18.

Independence, in all probability taking aim at the historical antecedents cited in the American Declaration itself.<sup>91</sup>

Given that he played “an important part in Britain’s foreign policy throughout the first half of the American War”, Murray was an ideal reader of *Philip II*.<sup>92</sup> Watson’s analysis of the moral deprivations brought upon Spain by the overreach of empire in the sixteenth century was only a thinly veiled warning for what might happen to the burgeoning British empire in the eighteenth, especially as events in America unfolded.<sup>93</sup> The loss of her American colonies was taken by many Scottish moralists as a sign that “excessive refinement and luxury and the concomitant effeminacy and dependence which it produced” were already evident in the British Empire.<sup>94</sup> William Cameron also focused directly on Britain’s colonies in North America, this time working his way attentively through William Barron’s *History of the Colonization of the Free States of Antiquity*. The St Andrews Professor had expressly marketed his latest work as a historical commentary on Britain’s “contest” with her American colonies and Cameron endorsed his optimism that

perhaps the Am: colonies may in time be more reconciled to a standing army, as Britain has been tho’ formerly it thought it dangerous to liberty, when it was established in the last century at a time when the parliament was so jealous of the royal prerogative.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 6. Murray’s criticism was entered in the margin alongside his transcription of Watson’s original argument that “This union may justly be considered as the first foundation of the Republic of the United Provinces. It is still regarded as containing the fundamental laws of the constitution ... the Provinces tacitly assume to themselves the sovereign authority & lodge it partly in the general assembly of the states, & partly in the states of the several Provinces”; cf., Watson, *History of Philip II*, 2: 66.

<sup>92</sup> Scott, *British Foreign Policy*, 236–7.

<sup>93</sup> Allan, “Anti-Hispanicism”.

<sup>94</sup> Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 40. On Scottish Enlightenment responses to the American Revolution more generally, see D. I. Fagerstrom, “Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series 11 (1954), 252–75; Sher, *Church and University*, 262–76, 317; Berry, *Social Theory*, 107–9.

<sup>95</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, ff5v–7r, quote from f7r; the note quoted above derives from William Barron, *History of the Colonization of the Free States of Antiquity, applied to the Present Contest between Great Britain and her American Colonies* (London, 1777), around 140–2. Though undated by Cameron himself, internal evidence suggests his commonplace book was probably compiled between 1782 and the early 1790s; the position of these notes near the front of his commonplace book would therefore suggest they were made in the early 1780s, when the hope still persisted that Britain would be reconciled with her American colonies. On Barron, see ODNB and M. R. M. Towsey, “St Andrews University in the Scottish Enlightenment: Disseminating the Project of

By the time Cameron read Barron, of course, events were fast conspiring to make reconciliation between Britain and her American colonies increasingly unlikely. Later readers tended to superimpose explanations for American independence onto the histories they read, seizing not least on David Hume's observation that "doubts arose to some men" during the reign of James I "that these colonies would in future periods shake off the yoke of the mother country and establish their own independency". As the law student Boyle commented, "*although Mr Hume did not live to see that period, yet the event has truly verified the opinions of those men*".<sup>96</sup> Boyle was too young to remember the political events of the 1760s and 1770s, and may have identified in such seventeenth-century prophecies a neat way of rationalising what was already a fact of life. Hume, our reader tacitly acknowledged, had been wrong in the 1750s to conclude that

Time has shewn, that the views, entertained by those who encouraged such generous undertakings, were more just and solid. A mild government and great naval force have preserved, and may still preserve during some time, the dominion of England over her colonies.<sup>97</sup>

The Newhailes annotator we came across in Chapter Five made the point explicitly in highlighting the very same passage, noting in the margin: "It needs scarcely to be observed that the original opinions have now been proved to be correct & that the independence of America was realised not more than 30 years after the printing of this edition".<sup>98</sup>

Meanwhile, Rev. Cameron turned to another of William Barron's works, his *History of the Political Connection between England and Ireland* (1780), in order to understand a second crucial point of friction in British imperial affairs. Barron's book was occasioned this time by contemporary proposals to extend free trade to Ireland, foreshadowing the Treaty of Union that would be imposed on Ireland in 1800–1801. Cameron's notes took in the basic outline of Barron's account and thus gave him ample historical material to support the view that Ireland would be more thoroughly reconciled to civil society by a closer union

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Enlightenment in Provincial Scotland" (unpublished MLitt dissertation, University of St Andrews, 2003), 14, 19, 34–48.

<sup>96</sup> Boyle Notebooks, 9; the emphasis is Boyle's own, probably to denote his own phraseology.

<sup>97</sup> Hume, *History*, 148. Note that Boyle did not quote this portion of Hume's narrative.

<sup>98</sup> NLS Nha.A75, Hume, *History*, 135.

with Britain. Where Henry VII “restored...peace to Ireland”, Elizabeth I “totally settled” her disorders and James I “greatly improved the state of I.”, George III could himself be relied upon to rescue Ireland once more from its “wretched situation”.<sup>99</sup> An unidentified member of the Clerk of Penicuik family took a rather different view of “English control over Ireland”, unable entirely to subdue his Whiggish sympathy for the Irish parliamentarians’ resistance to Charles I in the 1630s.<sup>100</sup>

The commonplace book of Andrew Douglas, meanwhile, takes us back to America. Douglas compiled a huge collection of notes from Robertson’s *History of America* which demonstrate that the annals of history did not simply provide readers with opinions on the major political upheavals of the eighteenth century, but also allowed them to understand more mundane features of their lives. Many of Robertson’s themes related very closely to Douglas’s own career as a paymaster in the navy, including such topics as the history of navigation and ship building, Robertson’s account of the European voyages of discovery and the role of colonisation in fostering commercial society.<sup>101</sup> Such notes were contextualised by others specifically on the history of the navy in England, including the encouragement given to the navy by major historical agents like Henry VIII and by Cromwell.<sup>102</sup>

Douglas then followed through his interest in the relationship between maritime history and the development of commercial society with an intensive study of Gibson’s *History of Glasgow*. After transcribing details of Glasgow’s foundation and early history, Douglas gathered a great deal of quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate how its growth had outstripped that of Edinburgh and smaller Scottish towns like Jedburgh (perhaps chosen for its proximity to his ancestral home in rural Berwickshire) in the eighteenth century, exploring how Glasgow’s maritime commerce with the colonies had stimulated its triumphant rise.<sup>103</sup> He therefore linked together one of the most noteworthy features of Scottish history in his own lifetime with a vocational

<sup>99</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, ff57r–57v; cf., William Barron, *History of the Political Connection between England and Ireland, from the Reign of Henry II to the Present Time* (London, 1780), 2–3, 88, 127–8, 134, 200.

<sup>100</sup> NAS GD18/5133, Notes on English Control of Ireland; quote from fol. 3v; possibly derived from Barron, *England and Ireland*, 154.

<sup>101</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol1, ff56r–126r; cf. Robertson, *History of America*.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, f151v; the unattributed notes yield no matches on ECCO.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, ff125r–126v; J. Gibson, *The History of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1777).

interest in British maritime development, highlighting the guiding hand of commerce, that great touchstone of eighteenth-century Scottish discourse.<sup>104</sup>

## VII

As Douglas's commonplace books demonstrate time and again, there was a certain stability in the meanings assigned to the texts of the Scottish Enlightenment by contemporary readers. In broad generic terms, readers approached moral philosophy for guidance on moral conduct; they turned to works on rhetoric and the *belles lettres* to improve their own standards of taste; they read history not only for 'philosophy teaching by example', but also for information about both the past and present. In this they were guided by critical judgements in the public domain, by generic aspects of commonplacing and by instructions on how to read in an age that famously invented literary criticism. Simultaneously, however, readers used texts for their own (often intensely personal) ends, creating meanings that were informed by their professional interests, political loyalties, existing commitments, worries and deeply-held beliefs. Books taught readers how to read, showed them how to behave, taught them to control their emotions, assisted them in their professional careers, prepared them to be responsible parents, helped them to overcome emotional heartache, encouraged them to be sympathetic friends and allowed them to come to terms with upheavals in the world around them. The books of the Enlightenment were therefore capable, as many of the Scots *literati* fervently hoped, of shaping readers in their own image. For some, such as the convalescing military officer David Melville, the law student Alexander Irvine or the lady laird Elizabeth Rose, reading the Enlightenment was life-changing, as it forced them to reconsider fundamentally the way they viewed themselves, their opinions and their daily lives. In many other cases, books served to consolidate a reader's pre-existing beliefs and values, giving them the confidence to embed those

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<sup>104</sup> On the growth of Glasgow, see T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities, c.1740–1790* (Edinburgh, 1975); idem., "The Colonial Trades and Industrial Investment in Scotland, c.1700–1815", in P. Emmer and F. Gaastra, *The Organisation of Interoceanic Trade in European Expansion, 1450–1800* (Aldershot, 1996), 299–311; T. M. Devine and G. Jackson (eds.), *Glasgow: Volume 1, Beginnings to 1830* (Manchester, 1995).

beliefs still further in their own lives and to share them with other readers less able or less willing to engage personally with the books of the Scottish Enlightenment.

If this illustrates the social impact of values and habits of mind associated with the Scottish Enlightenment, it also has important implications for the way in which we view the act of reading itself in the past. For the readers surveyed here were clearly engaged in an ongoing process of assimilating and appropriating the books they read. In Michel Foucault's memorable image, provincial readers of the Scottish Enlightenment did indeed act as intellectual "poachers",<sup>105</sup> constantly remaking the text in front of them by selecting, highlighting or altering passages that appealed most directly to them for personal, pragmatic or vocational reasons. In Alberto Manguel's more idiosyncratic terminology

Reading...is not an automatic process of capturing a text in the way photosensitive paper captures light, but a bewildering, labyrinthine, common and yet personal process of reconstruction.<sup>106</sup>

If we accept that readers enjoyed a degree of freedom in fashioning meaning from texts, it follows that they did not necessarily have to agree with the books in front of them. In eighteenth-century Scotland, there was one factor above all others which encouraged readers to resist the narrative strategies of Enlightenment writers, challenging their prescriptive identities and forging new readings of text – the Union of 1707.

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<sup>105</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, 1.

<sup>106</sup> Manguel, *History of Reading*, 39, 289.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### “THAT INDEPENDENCY WHICH A WHOLE NATION HAD RENOUNCED”: NEGOTIATING SCOTTISH IDENTITY

In his *Chapters in the Life of a Dundee Factory Boy* (1850), the son of a “country shoemaker” in rural Angus recalls his earliest exposure to the world of reading as a young boy around the turn of the nineteenth century:

I picked up an old tattered book, which proved to be a copy of the metrical life of Sir William Wallace and King Robert the Bruce. I took it home and got a severe scolding from my mother, as she thought I had been reading it. However, if I did not that day indulge in a perusal of what she strongly condemned for Sunday reading, I committed the sin on the first Sabbath after this. I had been reading little snatches of it through the week, and was so delighted with the adventures of the Scottish Patriot, that I fully determined to give my mother the slip on Sunday and take Wallace in my pocket.<sup>1</sup>

As the anonymous “factory boy” later acknowledged, Blind Harry’s medieval epic, *The Life of Wallace*, “was the first book that stirred my mind, and set me on a career of reading and thinking that will only terminate with my life, or the complete prostration of my faculties”.<sup>2</sup> However, it presented a narrative of the Scottish past that was rather different to the one propagated a generation earlier by the great historians of the Scottish Enlightenment. In the hands of Hume, Robertson and many of their less well-known peers, Scottish Enlightenment historiography was an exercise in “identity-prescription”.<sup>3</sup> They considered the Union a thoroughly good deal, bringing Scotland at long last into fruitful partnership with England’s historic wealth and much more robust parliamentary traditions. Their national histories were

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of a Dundee Factory Boy*, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 35. Burns wrote to Dr John Moore on 2 August 1787: “The story of Wallace poured a tide of Scottish prejudice in my veins which will boil along these till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest”. Like Burns, the “factory boy” probably read *Wallace* in the popular edition of William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, which went through at least 23 editions between 1722 and 1859; ODNB; E. Walsh, “Harry’s *Wallace*: the evolution of a hero”, *Scottish Literary Journal*, 11 (1984), 5–19.

<sup>3</sup> The term is O’Brien’s, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 3.

unashamedly ‘British’ histories and scholars have convincingly outlined the numerous narrative strategies they used to encourage readers to cast aside old notions of exclusive Scottishness in favour of a new “Anglo-British” patriotism.<sup>4</sup> This chapter assesses the success of such narrative strategies in consolidating the Union in the hearts and minds of readers, at the same time revealing the extent to which readers did not simply assimilate and appropriate the books they read but could also subvert the meanings intended for them.

## I

For many Scots preparing for public life in the second half of the eighteenth century, a basic working knowledge of English history was considered crucial. John Grant, minister of Dundurcus, advised Lord George Gordon (recently elected MP) to read up on the history of Parliament and English law before going down to Westminster – advice that the dangerously unbalanced Gordon, who gave his name to the anti-Catholic Gordon riots that swept the country in 1780, may have done well to follow.<sup>5</sup> Gordon was in an unusual position of course, and most provincial Scots seem to have made do with a thorough reading of David Hume’s *History of England*. This was because, as the celebrated Irish actor and elocutionist Thomas Sheridan pointed out in his *Plan of Education* (1769), Hume was widely acknowledged to have written the most successful *History of England* yet produced:

As our own history is that which chiefly imports us to know, Hume’s *History of England* cannot be read too often, nor with too much attention. And this, not only because it is the clearest, and most impartial of any hitherto produced, but because of the goodness of the style, which will improve the taste of the boys in English composition. After having read

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<sup>4</sup> Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 209; see also, O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*; S.J. Brown (ed.), *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire* (Cambridge, 1997); Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* II; David Allan, “Protestantism, Presbyterianism and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Historiography”, in Ian McBride and Anthony Claydon (eds.), *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650–c.1850* (Cambridge, 1998), 182–205.

<sup>5</sup> NAS GD248/616/3/2, Rev. John Grant to Lord Gordon on his election to Parliament, recommending Kames’s *Sketches of the History of Man*. Lord George Gordon (1751–1793) entered Parliament in 1778 and was president of the Protestant Association in England in 1780, see ODNB; Sher, *Church and University*, 194–5; R. K. Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland, 1778–1782* (New York, 1987).

it with care, each boy should be employed in making an abstract of it from the time of the conquest, taking notice only of the most material facts, without entering into the spirit of parties, policies or intrigues of the time. The abstract of each reign should be closed with an account of the principal laws made during that reign.<sup>6</sup>

David Boyle of Sherralton (1772–1853) adopted precisely this kind of approach in compiling a 40-page manuscript abridgement of Hume's *History*. Boyle eventually became Lord President of the Court of Session, but read Hume's *History* when still a teenage law student at the University of Glasgow in the autumn and winter of 1788, with his notes restricted exclusively to the Stuart volumes.<sup>7</sup> Sadly, we know not whether the abridgement was part of Boyle's formal training or an informal self-imposed exercise that reflected his own personal reading strategies, perhaps intended as a personal commemoration of the momentous events of 1688–1689. Nevertheless, the notes reveal how Hume's *History* functioned as a comprehensive historical manual for an ambitious young man on the make, giving him a directory of basic information on English history which he could later deploy in an eminent career in the Scottish law courts as well as in polite conversation. Boyle only rarely chose to quote his source directly, preferring instead to note in sequential order summaries of Hume's text. The focus was not simply on party, policy and diplomacy, but also included, as Sheridan's advice and his own chosen career path dictated, the legal and constitutional developments of each reign as well as notes on England's cultural and literary history. This diversity is well illustrated in the following extract from his notes on the reign of James I, taken from one of Hume's characteristic "Appendices":

The extent of the jurisdiction of the court of high commission was almost immeasurable and the star chamber may be stiled the engine of absolute monarchy. Monarchy undoubtedly was at its highest pitch in England upon the accession of the house of Stuart. Great ideas amongst the writers of those times of the extent of Princes' Prerogative. By an order of Elizabeth, books were only allowed to be published at London, Cambridge, and Oxford. Stateliness and dignity alone distinguished the nobility from the common people. Civil subordinate to military honours. Greater prevalence of duelling than either before or since. The revenue of James as it stood in 1617, amounted to 450,000 pounds. However it would go farther

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Sheridan, *A Plan of Education for the Young Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain* (London, 1769), 98.

<sup>7</sup> Boyle Notebook; ODNB.

then, than in our days. The militia of England consisted of 16,000 men. The English excelled in shipbuilding and the forging of iron cannon. The East India Company received a new charter during this reign, and had their stock increased to 1,500,000 pounds.<sup>8</sup>

While Sheridan implied his was an exclusively masculine method of reading history, Hume's *History* was treated in a similar manner by a number of Scotswomen whose reading notes survive – not least a youthful Elizabeth Rose, who abridged Hume's *History* in its entirety, including Smollet's so-called *Continuation*. There is no particular surprise in this: Hume acknowledged privately and in print the growing significance of female readers in the literary marketplace,<sup>9</sup> and his *History of England* was unashamedly commended as the most “useful and entertaining” guide to British history by bestselling conduct writers such as Lady Sarah Pennington and Hester Chapone.<sup>10</sup> Even Hannah More acknowledged Hume's contribution to national historiography, although she was more than a little suspicious of his motivations (she considered this “serpent under a bed of roses” unsuitable for all but the most well-prepared readers).<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Rose's relatively naïve abridgement shows how the *History of England* could be used by the women readers such conduct writers addressed, touching as it does not only on England's constitutional development, but also on female biography and domestic economy (the price of livestock in 1199, for instance, and the introduction of “sallads, carrots and other vegetable roots” to English tables in the sixteenth century).<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Elizabeth Rose took care to note down summaries or complete transcriptions of nearly all of Hume's characteristic pen portraits of English monarchs, a common approach which allowed Scottish readers to familiarise themselves with the basic chronology of English constitutional history – as

<sup>8</sup> Boyle Notebook, 14–5; compare Hume, *History*, 5: 124–55.

<sup>9</sup> For Hume's recommendation of history to his female readers, see *Essays*, 563. Hume's expectations for female readers are discussed by Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 60–1; 104–5; idem., “If Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor king Charles': History, the Novel and the Sentimental Reader”, *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), 111–31. For Robertson's relationship with female readers, see K. Glover, “The Female Mind”.

<sup>10</sup> Hester Chapone, *Improvement of the Mind* (London, 1773), 2: 212; Lady Sarah Pennington, *Advice to Daughters* (4th edn; London, 1767), 62–3.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah More, *Hints Towards forming the Character of a Young Princess* (London, 1805); quoted by St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 621.

<sup>12</sup> NAS GD1/726/10, Notes on a History of England, f3r (cf. Hume, *History*, 1: 404); f15v (cf. Hume, *History*, 3: 327). Elizabeth may have cross-referenced such historical *minutiae* with her own domestic memorandum or account books, as was the habit of Mrs Elizabeth Shackleton; see Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 127–60, especially 133.

well as giving Elizabeth a plentiful supply of the moral *exempla* she so treasured in reading histories.

By making women “the sovereigns of the Empire of Conversation,” Philip Hicks argues that Hume provided

the political and philosophical sanction for women, if not as the writers, then at least as the readers of history, and as important influences upon a new political culture whose history would one day be recorded.<sup>13</sup>

In this light, the intervention of Jean Drummond, Duchess of Atholl, seems particularly significant. On 5 February 1762, Drummond wrote to her nephew and son-in-law John Murray (who succeeded as 3rd Duke in 1764) describing her eager anticipation of the latest volumes of Hume’s *History*. She admitted being “very well entertained” by what she had “already read of his historical writings”, and added that the latest releases had been “very well spoke of” in the critical press.<sup>14</sup> She was not to be disappointed, reporting back on 2 March:

I am just now reading Mr. Hume’s History of England, and am more entertained and more instructed (that is to say, I can form more distinct notions, and retain them better in my memory of what were the transactions, laws and customs of the earliest times of this island) than I ever was by any history of England I have read formerly; were you to read it, I’m persuaded you would think your time very well bestowed.<sup>15</sup>

In Jean Drummond’s apparently nonchalant terms, Hume’s *History* was regarded as such an indispensable part of contemporary print culture in Scotland precisely because the history of “this island” was now unequivocally associated in many elite households with the “history of England”. That is why Hume’s *History of England* was seemingly considered such an integral part of the education of the aspiring judge David Boyle, the lady laird Elizabeth Rose and, most intriguingly perhaps, the future 3rd Duke of Atholl. Murray’s past was intimately bound up with Scotland’s post-Union legacy: as the eldest son of the Jacobite commander Lord George Murray (1694–1760), the man that became the 3rd Duke campaigned relentlessly to redeem his tainted heritage,

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<sup>13</sup> P. Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture: Clarendon to Hume* (Basingstoke, 1996), 173.

<sup>14</sup> NRAS 234, Box 49/1/32, Duchess of Atholl to John Murray, 5 February 1762. On critical responses to Hume’s *History* in print, see Hicks, *Neoclassical History*, 194–202; James Feiser, “The Eighteenth-Century British Reviews of Hume’s Writings”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57 (1996), 645–57.

<sup>15</sup> NRAS 234, Box 49/1/32, Duchess of Atholl to John Murray, 5 February 1762.

serving in the Hanoverian army in 1745, marrying into the loyalist branch of his family and aligning himself with the Bute and Grenville administrations in Parliament.<sup>16</sup> Evidently his aunt considered a judicious reading of Hume's *History* instrumental in consolidating his carefully manicured Hanoverian identity and, ultimately, in securing the lands and title of Atholl. It was advice that Murray seems readily to have accepted, with Hume's *History of England* again the focus of family reading at Blair Castle once he was safely ensconced as the 3rd Duke; his own Duchess wrote in 1776 for "a book to succeed Hume's *History*, which I admire much. It is a very pretty style and fine language".<sup>17</sup> To advance in life in late eighteenth-century Britain, it seems, members of the professional and landholding elites in Scotland had to be intimately familiar with the English past – and this invariably entailed a close reading of David Hume's *History of England*.

## II

As J. G. A. Pocock explains, such eagerly Anglophone readers were merely acting out Hume's broader intentions: "Hume does not feel much need to invoke Scottish history to explain the present that preoccupies him and his readers... He thought Scots should study the English national context and not their own".<sup>18</sup> Many also embraced the particular linguistic agenda of certain Scottish writers to expunge 'Scotticisms' from polite discourse.<sup>19</sup> Publications like Sir John Sinclair's *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (1782) and James Beattie's *List of two hundred Scotticisms with Remarks* (1779) were especially well-suited to the kind of readerly self-fashioning we explored in the previous chapter, leaving as they did blank spaces with an explicit invitation to readers that they should complete them with the correct forms of English usage. It was precisely in this manner that John Drummond Erskine filled out his copy of Sinclair's *Observations*, no doubt attempting to refine his rough east-coast accent before taking up a post as writer to the East India

<sup>16</sup> ODNB.

<sup>17</sup> NRAS 234, Box 25/II/8, Duchess of Atholl to her son, 7 January 1776.

<sup>18</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* II, 179, 261. Allan points out that some English readers considered Hume to constitute "a threat...to a sense of English nationhood itself", *Making British Culture*, 216.

<sup>19</sup> J. G. Basker, "Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain", in J. Dwyer and R. B. Sher (eds.), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993), 81–95.

Company in India. He also added extemporaneous notes to the effect that, for instance, “*Word* in Scotch means also *mention, report* + / I have heard no word about him / I have heard no mention of him”, “the English usually divide the Day into two parts only morning & evening – the Scotch divide it into four parts, morning, forenoon, afternoon, & evening”, and “*Dull of hearing* is used for *deaf*, but the single word *dull* is not used in that sense”.<sup>20</sup> In the process, Erskine revealed his familiarity with the classics of Scottish literature in elucidating Sinclair’s discussion of the term “Gentle”, pointing out that it meant “of noble blood – The Gentle Shepherd All: Ramsay means the Shepherd of high birth”.<sup>21</sup> In a copy of Beattie’s *Scotticisms* now held by the National Library of Scotland, meanwhile, an unknown reader highlighted a number of entries, including the observation “*Tradesman*, in Scotland, is one who works with his hands at a trade. In England, it is a shop-keeper, *and seems to be appropriate to those who do not work with their hands*”.<sup>22</sup>

The Royal Navy paymaster, Andrew Douglas of Cavers, Berwickshire, who seems to have been based at the admiralty buildings in London for much of his career, also took an intense interest in Scotticisms. This time his attempts to improve his use of the English language were guided by a much more unusual source, *Animadversions upon the Elements of Criticism* (1771) published by another Scottish exile in England, James Elphinston.<sup>23</sup> In characteristic manner, Douglas immediately noted down Elphinston’s introductory argument that “improvement ought to be the sole object of criticism. Expression may be improved in its arrangement, neatness, veracity, harmony, dignity, precision & purity”. He proceeded to translate Elphinston’s direct assault on the prevalence of Scotticisms in Lord Kames’s classic *Elements of Criticism* into a series of generalist injunctions which he could apply to his own use of the English language, ranging from snappy maxims

<sup>20</sup> Dunimarle Library, [no classmark], Sir John Sinclair, *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (London, 1782); for these examples, see 34, 47 and 101. Compare with James Beattie, *Scotticisms*, British Library copy, shelfmark c.61.b.6(1). On the Scottish obsession with Scotticisms, see especially Berry, *Social Theory*, 16–7; Sher, *Church and University*, 214.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>22</sup> NLS L.C.195, James Beattie, *A List of Two Hundred Scotticisms, With Remarks* (Aberdeen, 1779).

<sup>23</sup> For Elphinston, see ODNB; what biographical detail we have on Douglas derives from his commonplace books, and personal ephemera he transcribed suggest he was based at the admiralty buildings in London.

(“In terminations, avoid a feeble word”; “Licentious ellipses detract from beauty as well as from correctness”) to longer summaries:

Scot[t]icism consists chiefly in the different application or construction of English words. No English word is so often misapplied by the Scotch as *these* for *those*. These, like this, exhibits its object near & definite; *those*, like *that*, its object remote or indefinite.<sup>24</sup>

Some Scots evidently digested such sentiments so thoroughly that they subjected the books of the Scottish Enlightenment to similarly stringent examination. Even though he considered Reid’s *Inquiry* “a book which will require to be often studied and which any man who at all pretends to literature ought to make his constant companion”, the speculative law student Alexander Irvine was still able to identify a certain diffuseness of style, noting disapprovingly that “On one occasion he uses want for wish which I believe is a Scot[t]icism”.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Edinburgh merchant George Grindlay (or perhaps more likely one of the Royal High School pupils who later had access to his library) corrected a number of Scotticisms in James Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour*, including the apparent aberration “every animal should be blooded” – with “blooded” hacked out and replaced by “bled” in the margin.<sup>26</sup>

Although some readers therefore endorsed Anglophone efforts to expunge the Scots language of its idiosyncrasies and impurities – often for demonstrably professional reasons – it is equally clear that many more defended the Scottish vernacular. John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, the well-known diarist and letter writer, “lamented the adoption of English accents and language”, considering the Doric unjustly “neglected by a fastidious generation who forgot that it is the language of pastoral poetry superior to anything ancient or modern”.<sup>27</sup> The anonymous Brechin commonplacener agreed, defending (apparently in his own words) the “remarkable superiority of the Scotch songs to the English... the Scotch songs are simple and tender, full of studies of nature and passion”.<sup>28</sup> The aspiring poet John Struthers recalled the defence given to vernacular poetry by Robert Russell, his manager at a colliery and

<sup>24</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol 2, f127r; compare, James Elphinston, *Animadversions upon Elements of Criticism* (London, 1771), iii, 55, 51, 84–5, and 87.

<sup>25</sup> Irvine Diary, 28 December 1801.

<sup>26</sup> NLS Grindlay.244, James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson* (London, 1785), 300.

<sup>27</sup> Ochtertyre, xvii, 263.

<sup>28</sup> NAS GD2/308, Extracts from different authors, unpaginated.



limeworks in Kilbride who had once invited him to “a social crack in a winter night”:

[Russell] had for the literature of his mother tongue the readiest conception, and the most delightful relish. His skill in rural affairs was most extensive, and his knowledge of human character was intimate, searching and expansive. He delighted in the strong common sense of Ramsay, so effectively put forth in the scenes of the *Gentle Shepherd*; and his contented and easy humour, so happily displayed in his *Fables*, *Epistles* and *Tales*; and he was transported with the stormy passion, the broad humour, and the melting pathos of Burns; but he dwelt with a peculiar speciality on the exquisitely natural ease and simplicity of poor Fergusson.<sup>29</sup>

If the holdings of private libraries are anything to go by, Russell's passionate defence of Scottish vernacular literature was typical of the Scottish reading public more broadly, with the poetry of Allan Ramsay, Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns far more widely distributed than any contemporary book on Scotticisms. Moreover, as we have seen, still more traditional literature also continued to bewitch readers, not least Blind Harry's *Life of Wallace*, of which the Dundee Factory Boy insisted:

There are few books so greedily read by the young as the metrical life of Wallace. The kingling style of its composition, and the fiery patriotism displayed in detailing the exploits of the Scottish chieftain, make it a great favourite with the boys, and secures for Wallace the first and highest place in the affection of juvenile hero worshippers.<sup>30</sup>

While vernacular poetry seemed to strengthen readers' relationships with traditional forms of Scottish culture, literature was used more urgently to consolidate their sense of identity – especially when, as was increasingly the case as Scots men and women came to play a full role in Britain's global expansion, readers were separated by hundreds or thousands of miles from their ancestral homes. Eliza Macpherson's letters to her daughter are filled with references to vernacular language and culture by way of maintaining her connection with the Highlands after she had left for London. On one occasion, she wrote to “entertain you with some Scotch dialect to strengthen your attachment, as mine to the Highlands”, although in this instance the Highland provenance was hardly authentic – the novel in question, *Duncan and Peggy* (1794),

<sup>29</sup> Struthers, *Poetical Works*, xlix–xlx.

<sup>30</sup> *Life of a Dundee Factory Boy*, 35.

being written by Elizabeth Helme, a native of County Durham residing in London. For those who had moved even further afield, such reminders of home were vital. After emigrating from the Inner Hebrides to upstate New York in 1807, the farmer's wife Mary Anne Wodrow Archbald often turned to Scottish literature to quench her yearning for the Scotland of her youth. Upon reading *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819), she considered John Gibson Lockhart's "picture of Scotland and Scottish manners...in general vivid and just", and found "the rough and wild scenes" of the Scottish islands portrayed in Walter Scott's *Pirate* "in unison with my early associations and thus peculiarly suited to my taste".<sup>31</sup>

As Alison Scott suggests, Archbald's "reading kept the bright home of her past clear in her memory and in her heart, in her waking hours and in her dreams".<sup>32</sup> Not only did her reading thus transport her back to the Scotland of her youth, she also obsessively collected pieces by Scottish authors, including Galt, Lockhart, Hogg, Scott and especially Scotland's "favourite son" Burns to consolidate her own personal identification with Scotland. Indeed, these authors came to play a vital role in her interaction with other readers in North America, as Archbald risked personal ridicule to introduce second generation Scots émigrés to the literature of their homeland. Scott therefore contends that Scottish books became "tools she used in a struggle for minds and hearts", helping Archbald to perpetuate vernacular Scottish culture in early Republican America and ultimately disseminating that distinctive pseudo-Scottish identity claimed by many North Americans to this day.<sup>33</sup>

### III

Just as readers continued to enjoy traditionally vernacular culture in the face of the Edinburgh *literati's* attempts to anglicise Scots language, they also continued to be interested in Scottish history in spite of Enlightenment attempts to elide Scotland's past more conveniently with that of England. On the most personal level, many readers trawled

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<sup>31</sup> Cited by Alison M. Scott, "'This Cultivated Mind': Reading and Identity in a Nineteenth-Century Reader", in Barbara Ryan and Amy M. Thomas (eds.), *U.S. Readers' Interactions with Literature 1800–1950* (Knoxville, 2002), 45–6.

<sup>32</sup> Scott, "'This Cultivated Mind'", 47.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

such works as Hailes's *Annals of Scotland* and Robertson's *History of Scotland* for information regarding their ancestors.<sup>34</sup> One particularly engaging example concerns Walter Scott of Datchet (1750–1825), an illegitimate son of the 2nd Duke of Buccleuch. He compiled notes on Scotland's turbulent past from a range of sources, including Hume's *History*, Henry's *History* and Pinkerton's *History of Scotland*, always highlighting the contribution of the great houses of the border region. A note from James Pettit Andrews's *History of Great Britain* (1794), for instance, confirmed that

Alexander Lord Hume was a powerful & turbulent baron. He had behaved so ill in his capacity as warden of the borders, that he was suspected of having assassinated James 4th to prevent an examination into his own misconduct. His retreat with the remaining troops at Flodden was looked on as scandalous.<sup>35</sup>

Datchet was a major in the thirteenth regiment of foot, widely praised for his gallant contribution to the seizure and defence of Menorca. Given this potent personal context, notes on so resolutely a martial theme would naturally have enhanced his own concept of military valour. However, the specific attention he paid to the rise of his ancestor, Walter Scott of Buccleuch, "the powerful border chieftain" who attempted in 1526 to rescue the teenage James V from the Earl of Angus, reflects his search through the annals of Scottish history for a sense of self. History helped Datchet understand where he had come from and consolidated his own somewhat tarnished identification with the great house of Buccleuch. Doubtless he dreamt of emulating the heroism of his ancestor, who in 1526 had been "forced to retire but not without the slaughter of many of his enemies".<sup>36</sup>

Many commonplace books of the period feature similar lists of events and deeds celebrating the Scottish past, although it is often difficult to determine what contribution, if any, these made to any

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<sup>34</sup> See for example NAS GD22/4/57, notes from Hailes's *Annals of Scotland* on famous Graham Earls of Menteith; NAS GD18/5148, Miscellaneous notes, 1801, notes on the Earl of Huntley's rebellion from Robertson's *History of Scotland*.

<sup>35</sup> NAS GD224/812/12, Papers from or Intended for a Commonplace Book, 1–2; cf. James Pettit Andrews, *The History of Great Britain, Connected with the Chronology of Europe with notes etc.* (London, 1794), 2: 221 n.134. Biographical information has been pieced together from correspondence and other material associated with Scott held in GD224.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; cf. John Pinkerton, *The History of Scotland from the Accession of the House of Stuart to that of Mary* (London, 1797), 2: 277–8.

individual's sense of identity. The clergyman and aspiring poet William Cameron reduced Robertson's *History of Scotland* to one such list with concise, though disjointed, entries on critical junctures in Scotland's relationship with England.<sup>37</sup> In very general terms, the tendency seems to endorse Robertson's own revisionist interpretation of the Scottish past, with notes highlighting the turbulence of the medieval barons, the tenacity of distinctive Scottish feudal institutions and the general backwardness of political life in sixteenth-century Scotland.<sup>38</sup> "The feudal barons were rather rivals than subjects of the prince", Cameron notes at one point, later lamenting the untimely ends of Stewart kings who might have dismantled the barons' power – "if James II had not been unfortunately kill'd by a cannon bursting he probably would first have quite demolish'd the feudal system". At the same time, such notes were juxtaposed with Cameron's own summaries of Robertson's commentary on the decline of feudalism in England and the continent: "Lewis 11th of France & Henry 7th of England first gave a fatal blow to the feudal system by restraining the exorbitant power of the barons & nobility"; "the pride & rapaciousness of Henry 8th humbled the nobility & the church & asserted the British liberty so his vices were highly beneficial to mankind".<sup>39</sup>

On this basis (and in the wider intellectual context of the commonplace book in which these notes were entered), what we probably have here is an earnest clergyman attempting to negotiate the Scottish past as Robertson had intended, as part of a general programme of reading apparently initiated to construct a broadly enlightened self. After all, Cameron entered these notes into the same commonplace book that featured extracts designed to help him cultivate good taste as a poet and polite eloquence at the pulpit;<sup>40</sup> it would be entirely consistent if his extracts from Robertson constituted a conscious effort to fashion an orthodox "Anglo-British" patriotism. Yet Cameron's historical notes remained in highly-curtailed list form without any direct analysis of the narrative significance of the incidents he extracted from Robertson's original text. At no stage did Cameron record exactly what he thought of Robertson's wholesale revision of the Scottish past, reflect on the

<sup>37</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book; ODNB.

<sup>38</sup> Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 181–2; O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 110–114; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* II, 263–5.

<sup>39</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, 12r–12v; compare with W. Robertson, *The History of Scotland* (London, 1759), 1: 20; 47; 32–3; 98–9. Kidd highlights Robertson's strategic use of the "early and unnatural deaths of kings"; *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 181.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 29r–30r, 32r–32v, 16v–19r.

transcriptions he made or even discuss why he singled out particular passages for extraction.

The sheer popularity of this reading method amongst eighteenth-century readers has important implications for our understanding of readers' responses to books such as Robertson's *History of Scotland*. The very act of extracting material from printed books and transcribing it directly into manuscript notebooks undermined narrative structure, especially when historical events and heroes fascinated contemporary readers so much more than the historian's arrangement of them. One extract taken by Cameron, for example, alludes to "the bravery of Bruce and Wallace" without referring to the complex, multi-layered narrative into which Robertson had woven their struggle against Edward I of England.<sup>41</sup> By all means, Robertson had allowed for a certain degree of admiration in his account of the heroes of medieval Scotland;<sup>42</sup> but Karen O'Brien insists "this is not to say that Robertson's history is either residually nationalist or nostalgic for the good old days of Scotland's martial independence". Instead, she suggests, Robertson's heroic portrayal of the Wars of Independence (and, indeed, medieval Scottish history as a whole) is a narrative ploy, projecting "an emotional range broad enough to encompass the sense of defeat which many of its Scottish readers, Whig, Tory and Jacobite, might have felt about their history".<sup>43</sup> Cameron's extract largely overlooks the sentimental tone of Robertson's narrative, and thus risks celebrating martial bravery as a virtue rather than, as Robertson intended (or at least as modern commentators have interpreted him), as an anachronistic feature of Scotland's barbarous and benighted feudal past. More importantly, Cameron's final extract from Robertson merely recorded that "James 6th joyfully crown'd king of England in 1603",<sup>44</sup> as if – chronologically, at least – Robertson's narrative was itself complete. In the process, Cameron ignored entirely Robertson's extended coda on the implications of the Union of Crowns for Scotland and the subsequent benefits accrued from the Union of Parliaments a century later.<sup>45</sup> He thus undermined the very foundations of Robertson's narrative, that 1707 had

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 12r; this is not a direct quote from Robertson, compare *History of Scotland*, 1: 10–1.

<sup>42</sup> O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 113–4; Robertson, *Militia Issue*, 80.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>44</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, 13v; compare Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 2: 246–8.

<sup>45</sup> Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 2: 248–60; see O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 103.

redeemed Scotland from her interminably feudal historical trajectory rather than 1603.

In extreme cases, this feature of contemporary reading practices seems entirely to have subverted the narrative intentions of Enlightenment revisions of the Scottish past. A member of the Jacobite Irvine family of Drum Castle, for instance, compiled a vast catalogue of notes on Scotland's early and medieval past extracted from a whole host of authorities writing with wildly varying ideological or narrative intents – including standard histories of Scotland by Robertson, Pinkerton and Hailes, as well as Nimmo's *General History of Stirlingshire*, Crawford's *Renfrewshire*, Abercomby's *Martial Achievements*, Goodall's *Introduction to the History and Antiquities of Scotland*, Scott's *Marmion* and Sinclair's *Statistical Account*.<sup>46</sup> He focused with pride on Scotland's ancient traditions, like "the Scottish white rose, which ... appears to have had no connection whatever with the York rose, & to have been more ancient than it",<sup>47</sup> and especially on those associated with the now defunct Scottish Parliament.<sup>48</sup> Irvine was another fascinated by tales of the great heroes and villains of Scottish history, usually relating their exploits to sites or objects that could still be seen in modern Scotland:

On Flodden Field, "an unhewn column" marks the spot where James IV fell (Marmion)

On the face of the hill of Kinnoul there is a cave in the steep part of the rock called the Dragon hole, in it Wallace is said to have hid himself (Stat. Ac. XVIII, 560)

Two miles NW of the village of Kincardine O'Neil, just by the parish church of Lumphanan, there is a valley where the vestiges of an ancient fortress are still to be discerned ... in this place we may conjecture that Macbeth sought an asylum.<sup>49</sup>

In this instance, Scottish history informed a reader's interaction with the physical landscape around him, allowing material traces of

<sup>46</sup> NRAS 1500, Forbes Irvine family of Drum Castle, Bundles 159 and 874, volumes 17, 84–5, 91–2, and 97–8. The Jacobite connections of members of the Irvine family are traced in A. Livingstone, C. W. H. Aikman and B. Stuart Hart (eds.), *The Muster Roll of Prince Charles Edward Stuart's Army, 1745–6* (Aberdeen, 1984).

<sup>47</sup> NRAS 1500, Volume 85, Historical Anecdotes, f12r; possibly taken from Andrews, *History of Great Britain*, 428.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, f3r; compare, Pinkerton, *History of Scotland*, 1: 373.

<sup>49</sup> NRAS 1500, Bundle 874, Biographical Notes and Monuments, unpaginated; compare *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (London, 1883), 584; Irvine's reference to the Dragon Hole is accurate, see OSA, 18: 560; the reference to Lumphanan is possibly taken from OSA, 6: 388.

Scotland's proudly independent past to reinforce the persistence of a distinctly Scottish identity. Irvine's notes may also reflect the significance of communal memory or oral history in perpetuating more exclusive forms of Scottish patriotism in late eighteenth-century Scotland, since many rural communities in provincial Scotland claimed folkloric links to mythical figures like Wallace, the Bruce, Macbeth and, more recently, Bonnie Prince Charlie. Yet the Irvine reading notes provide no clearer indication of their personal meaning than Cameron's extracts from Robertson's *History of Scotland*. Their most probable compiler was the art dealer and painter James Irvine (1757–1831), whose career and personal associations provide some intriguing clues. Born and raised at Drum Castle, a former Jacobite hideout west of Aberdeen, Irvine lived in exile in Rome for most of his adult life, never managing entirely to escape the Jacobite associations of his ancestors – unlike his nephew Alexander, the Irvine commonplacer with the self-confessed addiction to speculative philosophy, who remained in Scotland and eventually became a respected Justice of the Peace and long-lived Baronet.<sup>50</sup> James Irvine's collection of "Historical Anecdotes" about the Scottish past may therefore reflect an exile's attempts to reaffirm links with his homeland, or even his professional sensitivity to the artistic possibilities of historical narrative. A more likely explanation, however, is that such defiantly patriotic notes (particularly those extracted from Jacobite writers such as Abercrombie and Goodall)<sup>51</sup> reflect the precise political, though increasingly sentimentalised, worldview of old Jacobite families across the north east of Scotland. After all, Irvine picked out a quotation on Wallace that's patriotic resonances were deafening for those still riled by Scotland's submission to the Union and the House of Hanover: "thus perished Wallace, whom Edward could never subdue. In his last moments, he asserted that independency which a whole nation had renounced".<sup>52</sup>

The motivations of Bishop Alexander Jolly in marking up his copies of Robertson's *History of Scotland*, Tytler's *Enquiry* and Goodall's

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<sup>50</sup> B. Skinner, *Scots in Italy in the 18th Century* (Edinburgh, 1966); works of art associated with Irvine's career were exhibited at the "Jacobite Virtuosi" exhibition held at the University of Aberdeen (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/jacobitevirtuosi/index.php>). For Alexander Irvine, see the extended case study in Chapter Six.

<sup>51</sup> Patrick Abercrombie is discussed in Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 74–5, 168–9; ODNB.

<sup>52</sup> NRAS 1500, Bundle 874, Biographical Notes and Monuments, 8r; the phrase is taken from a late edition of Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, *Annals of Scotland...* (Edinburgh, 1797), 1: 311.

*Examination* are rather more transparent. As a fellow native of the north east, Jolly shared Irvine's intellectual lineage and Episcopalian heritage. Jolly literally encircled Robertson's *History* with material that undercut its textual authority and inherently Unionist agenda. On the inside cover, Jolly pasted a sequence of extracts from George Chalmers's *Caledonia* (1807–24) that were deeply critical of the “apocryphal... theory of this royal historiographer; nothing can be so little supported by facts, and nothing can be more inconsistent with analogy”. His extracts from Chalmers culminated in the characteristically ironic comment that

Robertson & Hume are supposed to have approached almost to the perfection of historic composition; and they had both attained it if the one had had more knowledge of the affairs of Scotland, & the other had had more research into the annals of Britain.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, he entered an extract from the *Aberdeen Journal* for 1818 onto the end pages which recounted the famous tale of the rescue of the Regalia of Scotland from Oliver Cromwell in 1652, highlighting the “love of independence” which led the governor of Dunottar Castle and his wife to smuggle the “symbols of monarchy” to safety.<sup>54</sup> Thus Jolly undermined the Unionist trajectory that Robertson had so carefully wrought around his account of the Scottish past, and he repeated the trick in annotating books by Robertson's historiographical antagonists.

Jolly pasted an extended extract from Gilbert Stuart's *History of Scotland* (1782) into the inside cover and title pages of Tytler's *Enquiry* that explained precisely how Tytler contributed to the controversy, in the process belittling both Robertson's scholarship and integrity:

This intelligent & ingenious author meets Mr Hume & Principal Robertson upon the great heads of the dispute about the honour of Mary & upon a slight survey of his observations I once intended to have joined my forces to his, in refuting the able & hypothetic partiality of the former historian & in exposing the feeble & unargumentative pertinacity of the latter. But I soon perceived ... that upon the special topics of controversy examined by Mr Tytler any aid of mine was unnecessary. His opponents have long since fled from the field & left him in possession of

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<sup>53</sup> NLS Jolly.1183, Robertson, *History of Scotland*, inside front cover. Chalmers's *Life of Mary, Queen of Scots* (1818) was ripe with sentimental Jacobitism, and attacked Robertson's *History of Scotland* mercilessly; ODNB.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, end pages.



it; & as the acquisition & the establishment of the Truth ought to be the firm & invariable pursuit & purpose of all historical inquirers, they should doubtless have acknowledged their defeat, nor would such an acknowledgement have argued any meanness in them. On the contrary it would have done them the greatest honour. For, by having constantly refused to do this justice to the public, to themselves, or to him, or to reply to his arguments if they really imagined them inconclusive, they are necessarily exposed to a censure that presses to violence against their candour & authority.<sup>55</sup>

Stuart was by no means an impartial observer, of course, but Jolly endorsed his assessment of the Marian controversy all the same, entering extracts from the same work into his copy of Goodall's *Examination* – with the same broad implications for Robertson's scholarly integrity:

Several writers have ventur'd to contradict Mr Goodal; but with regard to his remarks & details concerning the forgery of the [Casket] Letters, they have not according to my apprehension advanced any facts or reasoning that are of real importance.<sup>56</sup>

There is little clear evidence as to what Jolly's precise purposes were in remaking Scottish Enlightenment texts in this way. He may simply have intended to remind himself of pertinent material at a later rereading of Robertson's *History of Scotland* or Tytler's *Enquiry*, but it is conceivable that the pasted additions were intended for a much wider audience. Jolly taught Episcopal acolytes informally at Fraserburgh for many years, and may well have emulated his eminent colleague in the Secession Church, George Lawson, who we have seen shared books in his personal library at Selkirk with students and members of his congregation. In this particular context, however, it may also be relevant that Jolly's books eventually formed the basis of the library of the Theological College of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, founded in 1810. Jolly's books evidently found their way to the College soon after his retirement from active service, and were certainly in place by 1826. Perhaps, then, Jolly's determined remaking of Robertson's *History of Scotland* – and his sympathetic additions to Tytler's *Enquiry* and Goodall's *Examination* – were designed to perpetuate his politically-charged

<sup>55</sup> NLS Jolly.2644, Tytler, *Inquiry*, inside front cover; Jolly's additional material came from Gilbert Stuart, *The History of Scotland from the Establishment of the Reformation, till the death of Queen Mary* (London, 1782), 1: 401.

<sup>56</sup> NLS Jolly.2290, Goodall, *Examination*, inside front cover; compare Stuart, *History of Scotland*, 1: 400.

reading of the life and crimes of Mary Queen of Scots to the next generation of Episcopalian clergymen.<sup>57</sup>

#### IV

We might reasonably expect George Ridpath, Church of Scotland minister and friend of the *literati*, to have been a good deal more sympathetic to Robertson's *History of Scotland*, but his engagement with Robertson's contribution to this very same controversy is even more revealing. In the early 1750s he recorded having "a good deal of chat with Robertson about his History... He has bestowed, and intends still to bestow a good deal of labour on it and I daresay it will be a valuable and entertaining work".<sup>58</sup> At later breakfasts with Robertson he evidently discussed the post-publication fate of the *History of Scotland*, and listened intently as its author outlined future historiographical projects and ambitions.<sup>59</sup> Truly, there can have been few readers in eighteenth-century Scotland who were better prepared to understand and appreciate Robertson's patriotic agenda – to spot the many narrative and textual strategies he put in place to direct his readers to read Scottish history in the way that he had prescribed.

Yet when Ridpath finally read Robertson for himself he was deeply perplexed. On the one hand he dutifully recognised the literary qualities that helped establish Robertson as one of the leading historians of the age:

The work certainly deserves great praises. The choice of facts is judicious, the disposition of them clear and regular, the descriptions animated, reflections just and natural, characters painted in glowing colours, and the stile elegant, perspicuous, easy and full of vigour.<sup>60</sup>

He complained, however, of Robertson's "want of sufficient detail in some facts of consequence, which, by sparing some reflexions and declamation, might have been given without increasing the bulk of the work". Although the language is characteristically polite and moderate, there is no doubting Ridpath's disappointment here and he proceeded

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<sup>57</sup> William Walker, *The Life of the Right Reverend Alexander Jolly D. D., Bishop of Moray* (Edinburgh, 1878); provenance data associated with Jolly collection at NLS.

<sup>58</sup> *Ridpath*, 143.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 249–50.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

to single out Robertson's celebrated account of Mary Queen of Scots for particular censure:

I cannot help thinking that there is at least a striking impropriety in the kindness shown to Mary, when 'tis plain the author holds her guilty of the worst of crimes. This also is naturally accompanied with a severity to Elizabeth for which there scarce appears sufficient ground, when the dangers to which she and her people were continually exposed by the increasing plots of her rival are impartially attended to.<sup>61</sup>

As neither Jolly nor Ridpath seem to have realised, Robertson's treatment of the rival queens was crucial to his overall strategy. To placate his Whig readers, he allowed that Mary may have been complicit in the notorious murder of her first husband Darnley (although he refused to convict her entirely) and laid out the evidence for readers to judge for themselves in a "Critical Dissertation concerning the Murder of King Henry and the Genuineness of the Queen's Letters to Bothwell" appended to the second edition of the *History of Scotland*.<sup>62</sup> Yet Robertson exonerated Mary entirely of involvement in the other crime for which she was condemned by traditional Whig historians, the Babington plot to assassinate Elizabeth and install herself as Catholic Queen of England.<sup>63</sup> By arranging elements of both Whig and Jacobite views alongside each other in his account of Mary, O'Brien suggests that he "hoped to demonstrate his own moderation and impartiality, and expected that his history would be a locus of agreement for both her partisans and detractors".<sup>64</sup>

As Ridpath's response demonstrates, however, this was a riskier strategy than modern commentators have acknowledged. Mary had become firmly entrenched in the eighteenth century as a totemic figure immediately redolent of the independent Stuart Scotland lost at the Glorious Revolution and Union. Her story was thus exceptionally divisive in contemporary Scotland, with Jacobite propagandists such as Goodall, Tytler and Chalmers vindicating her conduct and Presbyterian Whigs reviling her Catholicism, loose morals and French connections. Despite being exceptionally well-placed to understand Robertson's

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>62</sup> Robertson, *History of Scotland*, especially 1: 337–45; 2: 39.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 2: 125–35.

<sup>64</sup> O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 121; see also Bongie, "Eighteenth-Century Marian Controversy", 236–52; Fearnley-Sander, "Philosophical History", 323–38; M. Lee Jr., "The Daughter of Debate", *SHR*, 68 (1989), 70–8; W. Zachs, *Without Regard to Good Manners: A biography of Gilbert Stuart 1743–1786* (Edinburgh, 1992).

narrative strategy as his close friend and regular breakfast companion, Ridpath still interpreted (or perhaps “misread”) this section of the *History of Scotland* as an unreconstructed Scottish Whig. Indeed, he even turned to precisely those partisan histories Robertson had hoped to supplant in clarifying his own response to this crucial episode in the *History of Scotland*. Reading “Buchanan’s *Detectio* and *Actio contra Mariam*”, for instance, he found further “fault in Robertson that he does not enter into particulars of the bad character of Bothwell with his contemporaries”.<sup>65</sup> His first reading of the *History of Scotland* disoriented Ridpath to such an extent that he spent a frenzied fortnight re-reading Robertson alongside more conventional Whiggish accounts, looking for corroboration of his own interpretation of Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>66</sup>

Ridpath’s diary reveals how the contested forms of Scottish patriotism circulating in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century could encourage readers to appropriate books for themselves, wilfully ignoring the textual strategies designed by writers and publishers to control their responses.<sup>67</sup> Ridpath admired the general thrust and style of Robertson’s account but could not understand why Robertson had tinkered with what he considered matters of vital import. By so magnanimously vindicating Mary to serve his own narrative strategies, Ridpath was deeply concerned that Robertson had endangered both the Hanoverian settlement and the Union. Significantly, perhaps, it was at about the same time that Ridpath started work on his own *Border History of England and Scotland*. Although an abrupt lacuna in the diary sadly conceals Ridpath’s ongoing dialogue with Enlightenment historiography at this crucial time in his own historiographical development, it is reasonable to assume that his aspirations as an historian were directly related to his experiences as a reader.<sup>68</sup> After all, as we

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<sup>65</sup> Ridpath, 243. Buchanan’s *Detectio Mariae Reginae* was published in Latin in 1571; the contemporary pamphlet *Actio Contra Mariam* has also long been attributed to Buchanan, but was probably not by him; ODNB. Ridpath greatly admired Buchanan, and had originally intended to write his biography before abandoning this project as impracticable; ODNB.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 240–3.

<sup>67</sup> Chartier, *Order of Book*, viii.

<sup>68</sup> There are several pages missing from the original manuscript between 13 April 1759 and 27 April 1759; see NAS CH1/5/122–2, Journal of the Rev. George Ridpath, 1755–1761. On the evening of the 13th, Ridpath had “read some articles in the February Review, particularly the account of Robertson, which is very favorable, but not more than the work deserves”; Ridpath, 243. Ridpath’s extended engagement with Robertson had, however, evidently been concluded by the time the diary resumes.

shall discover in the next chapter, Ridpath also expressed profound reservations about the integrity of David Hume's account of seventeenth-century British history, complaining that "the detail is often wanting that is sufficient to enable a man to judge for himself".<sup>69</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that Ridpath's own entry into the Republic of Letters was provoked by the strategies developed by both Robertson and Hume in their enlightened narratives of the Scottish past.<sup>70</sup>

While Ridpath never ruminated directly on the nature of his own patriotism, some readers did draw a direct link between history and national identity. In the next generation, the Rev. John Grant (Church of Scotland minister of Dundurcus and later Elgin) outlined his patriotic assessment of the significance of history in a revealing letter to an unidentified recipient: the "history of our country is always an object of importance, as it informs us of the various revolutions of the state, the manners of our ancestors and their progress in civilisation".<sup>71</sup> In these terms, intriguingly, Grant went on to recommend Ridpath's own *Border History*. Grant argued of Ridpath's place in the national historiography that "none amongst this crowd...has given more attention to his authorities than the author of the border history of England and Scotland". Though "not possessed of the political sagacity of an Hume, the pleasing arrangement of a Robertson, or the elegance & discerning research of [Edward] Gibbon", Grant nevertheless recommended Ridpath for the "plain & artless manner" by which he had presented "a great variety of facts properly vouched, that throw considerable light on the Border transactions".<sup>72</sup>

Grant was particularly keen to point out how Ridpath's "artless" approach illuminated one of the crucial moments in the relationship between England and Scotland: "What particularly pleased me, & which I consider as the best detailed part of his book, is the account of Edward [I] his acquiring the sovereignty of Scotland, & the manner

<sup>69</sup> Ridpath, 264.

<sup>70</sup> *The border-history of England and Scotland, deduced from the earliest times to the union of the two crowns* (London, 1776) was unfinished when Ridpath died. It was completed and published by his brother Philip, who also provided a preface (see *ODNB* for Philip's role). Whether Ridpath would have engaged directly with Robertson, Hume et al had he lived to complete his life's work, there is no indication. Philip Ridpath's preface and introduction certainly make no direct reference to the Enlightenment historiography that had presumably done so much to stimulate his brother's historical sensibilities.

<sup>71</sup> NAS GD248/616/3/1, John Grant to anonymous recipient, n.d.; *Fasti*.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.; for Gibbon's own assessment of his "place in the triumvirate of British historians", see Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* II, 163, 309.

that it was lost by Edward II”.<sup>73</sup> Ridpath’s neutral presentation of evidence (“properly vouched”) concerning the Scottish past empowered patriotic readers to judge the significance of this crucial episode for themselves and was thus, according to Grant, eminently preferable to the narrative constructs of the Scottish past propagated by the more celebrated historians of the Edinburgh Enlightenment.

Grant’s comments reflected an increasing determination throughout provincial Scotland that Scots should take possession of their own history, resisting the efforts of Anglophone historians in Edinburgh to neutralise the potent controversies that coloured relations between English and Scots.<sup>74</sup> This point was made explicitly by Grant in a letter to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, a society founded as a challenge to the cultural hegemony of Robertson and his Enlightenment cronies.<sup>75</sup> Here, Grant delivered an impassioned plea for patriotic Scots to take possession of their own history, at the same time positioning himself between the patriotic ‘Fergusian’ mythology perpetuated by Hector Boece and George Buchanan, and the ‘philosophical’ historiographies of Hume and Robertson that aimed to supplant them:

Each Scotsman is called on to advance the design, & contribute his share of materials & information to the society that under their penetrating eye, the antient history of our country may be rescued *from the reveries of the theorist or the dictates of national vanity*, and as just information obtained as the state of facts & nature of the enquiry can admit.<sup>76</sup>

Grant was by no means alone in believing that the history of Scotland (and particularly the earlier ages of Scottish history that had been so roundly dismissed by Robertson as being of no contemporary relevance)<sup>77</sup> needed to be ‘rescued’ from the narrative theories of the Edinburgh Enlightenment. According to David Allan, the society, like its junior partner the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society (founded in 1784), reflected the belief “that direct involvement in historical studies was a patriotic duty incumbent on gentlemen across the country, as

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> See W. Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh, 1998), 207.

<sup>75</sup> Allan, “Provincial Readers”, 384–6; Allan, “Provincial Culture”; Shapin, “Property, Patronage, and the Politics”.

<sup>76</sup> NAS GD248/616/3/2/11, John Grant to anonymous recipient, 15 August 1782; the emphasis is my own.

<sup>77</sup> O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 100; Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 1: 1–77.

well as an urgent moral necessity for the fate of Scotland's culture".<sup>78</sup> Rev. James Scott, who was deeply implicit in the foundation of the Perth Society as well as being a prominent member of the Perth Subscription Library, regarded the city's "empirically-based intellectual culture" as the ideal provincial antidote to "the false philosophy... which was adopted by some writers in our own country".<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, of course, this antiquarian's charter encouraged provincial Scots to enter the Republic of Letters in their own right. Many of the local histories whose readership we highlighted in Chapter One were at their most effective when recording Scotland's documentary and archaeological remains, becoming indispensable resources for contributors to the *Statistical Account* and eventually to generations of subsequent historical writers. Grant himself noted that the "few copper pieces of antiquity" which he had discovered near Nairn "are the antiques which I mention in a preface to a collection relative to British antiquities that is now at Edinburgh, as a proof among others that the Romans had penetrated into Scotland, as far north as Inverness, & the cairns on Tarbetness in Ross".<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Grant seems constantly to have had potential publications on the go, including two large-scale proposals that never reached the press, a set of chronological tables and a collection of classical passages on British antiquity.<sup>81</sup>

Many other provincial Scots with the education, local knowledge, landed connections and leisure time were equally keen to make a genuine contribution to demystifying the distant Scottish past. In his own personal reading notes, Rev. William Macgregor Stirling (an active member of the Leightonian Library in Dunblane, as we have seen) noted a "darkness and uncertainty regarding the history of Scotland prior to Edward's time" and lauded Father Thomas Innes for opening up "a grand era in our *national* antiquities, being the first work that led

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<sup>78</sup> Allan, "Provincial Readers", 385. For his account of English readers' engagement with Scottish Enlightenment historiography (often, interestingly, defending English interests or traditions against Scottish revisionism), see *Making British Culture*, 104, 115–6, 122–7, 165–71, 179–83, 236.

<sup>79</sup> OSA, 11: 513; Allan, "Provincial Readers", 386.

<sup>80</sup> NAS GD248/616/3/2/11, John Grant to anonymous recipient, 15 August 1782; Grant's analysis of the antiquities duly appeared as "Of the Roman Hasta and Pilum; of the Brass and Iron used by the Ancients, by the Rev. Mr. John Grant, Minister of Dundurcas" in *Transactions of the Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1792), vol 1 (of 1), 241.

<sup>81</sup> NAS GD248/615/4, *British Antiqua*; GD248/615/6, *Chronological and Historical Tables*.

to a rational inquiry into them". He concluded his notes from reading Innes's *Critical Essay* and Pinkerton's *Enquiry* by noting that a critical edition of early Scottish sources might arise from their investigations:

Quere: Might not a translation of some at least of those curious remains form an appropriate portion of the *Miscellanea Scotia*? No translation, so far as is known, has ever been published. For the satisfaction of the more learned antiquary, the Latin might be given in a parallel column. A short introduction might be given, and some explanatory footnotes might be deemed not impertinent.<sup>82</sup>

Such reading strategies help to explain the revolution in local historiography in late-eighteenth-century Scotland, both on the part of the men who decided to write local history (many of whom, like Ridpath, had read Robertson, Hume et al) and the increasing numbers who bought, borrowed and read local history books. They also explain the success of Sinclair's hugely ambitious project to compile a collaborative *Statistical Account of Scotland*, both in attracting suitable contributions from patriotic, historically-minded parish clergy interested in the improvement of modern Scotland and in appealing to provincial readers who were best placed to enact improving measures. Such reading strategies even connect to subsequent developments, not least the rise of clubs at the very end of our period such as the Bannatyne (established in 1823), Maitland (1829) and Abbotsford (1833) dedicated to the publication of historical documents.

## V

Of course, antiquarian research was simply one avenue of patriotic endeavour that was provoked in provincial Scots by reading the Enlightenment. The conjectural tenor of Enlightenment historiography also stimulated readers' understanding of the social and economic conditions of modern Scotland. William Lorimer, tenant farmer of Moulinearn near Dunkeld, and tutor to the family of Sir James Grant of Grant, kept a commonplace book which located "Highland customs, culture, families and etymology" on the line of the progress of

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<sup>82</sup> NRAS 2362/367, Historical Notes of William Macgregor Stirling, unpaginated (the emphasis is original); for William Macgregor Stirling's publishing profile, see *Fasti*; for the broader context, see R. Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2004).



civilisation that had been illuminated by the likes of Adam Ferguson, John Millar and Adam Smith.<sup>83</sup> Lorimer observed that:

The old highlanders cultivated very little ground, they lived on milk, cheese, a little flesh of sheep or goats, & on the *blood* of their cattle, & most of all on the plunder & booty they took from one another & from the *Lowlanders*, & lastly on shooting deer & roes.

This was the life of a Scots Highlander, resembling the wild *Scythians* or *Tartars* in eating blood, which rendered them fierce, & more warlike, & like the modern *Indians* who will apply to no cultivation of lands, no trade but sit idle at home, sleeping, dosing & drinking, when they are not abroad hunting or fighting – The latter look on labour of any other kind as the work of slaves, in which they resemble the *Germans*, according to the account given of them by Tacitus.<sup>84</sup>

This characteristically conjectural analysis of Highland culture demonstrated that for Lorimer, as for many of the Scottish Enlightenment's leading minds, Highland society in Scotland was not as advanced as Lowland society, though it was now beginning to improve. This realisation in turn influenced the way Lorimer described conditions in various other parts of Britain in a travel diary documenting his journey from London back to the Highlands. He reported, for instance, on the progress of manufactures in and around Glasgow since the 1730s which he clearly believed had helped hasten the progress of civilisation in the area. Accordingly, he advised his landowning employer to pursue the improvement of his estates by the same means, hoping that manufactures and advanced agricultural methods would relieve the Highlands from its "natural" – that is to say, historical – state of backwardness.<sup>85</sup>

In Lorimer's case, it is evident that familiarity with Scottish conjectural history could encourage a provincial reader to become an active

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<sup>83</sup> For the notion of progress in Scottish conjectural history, see Broadie, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 64–77; Berry, *Social Theory*, especially ch5 and ch6; Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*; A. Bernstein, "Adam Ferguson and the Idea of Progress", *The Eighteenth Century* 19 (1978), 99–118. John Home reflected on many aspects of Highland society noticed by Lorimer in his *The History of the Rebellion in the Year 1745* (London, 1802).

<sup>84</sup> NAS GD248/37/4/3, Customs of the highlanders (Lorimer's emphasis); Lorimer's notes may derive from John Macpherson, *Critical Dissertations on the Origin, Antiquities, Language, Government, Manners and Religion of the Ancient Caledonians* (London, 1768), though they may represent his own ruminations on Highland culture.

<sup>85</sup> NAS GD248/37/4/4, Notes made by William Lorimer on Scottish agriculture and manufactories.

agent in the material improvement of Scotland. This more obviously tended to be the effect of reading agricultural works, most readily illustrated by an extended letter sent to an unnamed correspondent at the heart of Enlightenment culture in Edinburgh by a member of the Pierson family of Balmadies in Angus. Evidently a farmer himself, Pierson came across a copy of Francis Home's *Principles of Agriculture and Vegetation* (1756) when he was laid low by a period of illness and was "more delighted" by it "than with any other I have yet read". He was especially impressed by Home's "observations on the different manures – with the distinctions he makes – betwixt clay marle and our shell marle which he observes is an animal substance", and clearly approved Home's staunchly empirical approach. However, one thing troubled Pierson:

Mr Hume [*sic*] p. 79 seems to think that animals inhabiting their shells are rarely to be found – and says "it must have been once a very common creature in this country, and appears to have been destroyed in most countries at once by some general disaster which afflicted it the natural deposition of soil from these waters has buried it so deep".

Pierson took issue with Home's conclusion in this regard, observing that "this does not at all appear from my marle moss, for in parts that have been cut for peatts when the water is drain'd off we find multitudes of these bukies full of animals resembling a welk, but very small and the shells of a blackish colour".<sup>86</sup> Pierson followed up his reading with his own investigations into the curious phenomenon he had noticed

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<sup>86</sup> Angus Local Studies Centre, Ms 324, Pierson of Balmadies Farm Commonplace Book, 158–9. This portion of the commonplace book contains constant references to a correspondent, and may therefore have been used as a copybook for draft correspondence. Pierson's reference was accurate, see Francis Home, *The Principles of Agriculture and Vegetation* (Edinburgh, 1756), 79. On Scottish works on agriculture, see Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 85–96, 197; P. Wood, "Science and the Aberdeen Enlightenment", in P. Jones (ed.), *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1988), 53–4; C. W. J. Withers, "Improvement and Enlightenment: Agriculture and Natural History in the Works of the Rev. Dr. John Walker (1737–1803)", in P. Jones (ed.), *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1988), 102–16. On the implementation of agriculture improvement, see R. H. Campbell, "The Landed Classes", in T. M. Devine, and R. Mitchison (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland Volume 1 1760–1830* (Edinburgh, 1988), 91–108; T. M. Devine, *The Transformation of Rural Society: Social Change and the Agrarian Economy, 1660–1815* (Edinburgh, 1994); J. E. Handley, *Scottish Farming in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1953); J. E. Handley, *The Agricultural Revolution in Scotland* (London, 1963); a contrasting view can be found in I. D. Whyte, "Before the Improvers: Agricultural and Landscape Change in Lowland Scotland, c.1660–c.1750", *Scottish Archives*, 1 (1995), 31–42.

with the express purpose of understanding marle, a significant type of manure which he used on his own farm. At the same time, he made his wider patriotic intent and willingness to engage directly in the writing process self-evident, concluding that “was it worth Mr Homes while I would send over pieces of each kind, if I knew what quantity he would want”.<sup>87</sup>

Although evidence for scientific reading experiences is remarkably scarce, this intensely pragmatic reading inevitably fed into the way some contemporary Scots saw the world – and especially the country – in which they lived. James Stirling, son of Rev. Macgregor Stirling, filled his commonplace book with a travel diary of a trip from Leadhills, the lead-mining village in Lanarkshire, to London. Like Lorimer, he noted key features of the increasingly industrial landscape he traversed, but he was more struck by

How much England has gained the ascendancy over Scotland in many points of view, and in nothing more than their exquisite taste in uniting beauty with magnificence to their seats ... The neatness and taste displayed in laying out their fields & pleasure-grounds is quite beyond the conception of a poor Scotchman.

Significantly, in this instance Stirling commented mournfully on Scotland’s natural disadvantages, especially in comparison to the better English climate which allowed “the grass in the meadows [to be in March] in a more vigorous state of vegetation, than we ever experience in Scotland sooner than the month of May”. Ultimately, he decided, such disadvantages “may always be the means of retarding various improvements in our country ...: ‘Scotland comes after like an unripe fair / who sighs with anguish at her sister’s air’”.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Angus Local Studies Centre, Ms 324, Pierson of Balmadies Farm Commonplace Book, 162. The draft letter later refers to “your friend capt. Strachan” (163), but contains no further indications of who the recipient may have been.

<sup>88</sup> NRAS 2362/40, Notes for a Commonplace Book, 1794; the poetic verse by Aaron Hill may have been taken from Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland* (4th edn; Dublin, 1775), 1: 246; it also appears in Charles Ross of Greenlaw, *The Traveller’s Guide to Lochlomond, and its environs* (Paisley, 1792), 85. Some phrases in Stirling’s travel notes resemble passages of W. Guthrie, *A New System of Modern Geography or a Geographical Historical and Commercial Grammar* (3rd edn; London, 1786), 231. It was quite common for contemporary travel diaries to be influenced by published examples; see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 51–7, 184–8, 231; Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading* (forthcoming).

## VI

The scarcity of surviving scientific reading notes serves as a salient reminder of the methodological limitations of this approach. However many reports we might find of individual reading in letters, diaries, marginalia and commonplace books (the type of material William St Clair decries as “anecdotal information”), they will only ever represent a tiny sample of historical reading experiences.<sup>89</sup> Innumerable more acts of reading took place in the past which were not even committed to paper, not to mention the written responses to books that have been lost or that still lie undiscovered in the closed collections of private libraries. We must therefore be wary of reading too much into the wider applicability of our reading experiences, eloquent though they frequently are in illuminating the world of the reader. Nevertheless, while catalogues and borrowing records of all kinds of libraries show that books of Scottish history and vernacular literature were widely encountered in provincial Scotland; close study of the evidence of reading experiences that does survive helps us to understand why. Readers did not adhere instantly and unquestioningly to the new forms of “Anglo-British” identity propagated by the Scottish Enlightenment. They still loved to read Scottish history, filling their notebooks with anecdotes, transcripts and lists of events that celebrated various aspects of the Scottish past. In so doing, they disrupted the narrative strategies so carefully constructed by the Scottish *literati* (whether deliberately or subconsciously), rebelling against the notion that only English history could adequately explain contemporary Scotland. This perhaps reflects the same universal yearning for a sense of self that characterises the craze for family history to this day, but provincial Scots also adhered to more specific forms of patriotism. Most importantly, as we have seen, readers came to develop their own interest in empirical, historical and antiquarian research as an antidote to the overly-schematic narratives constructed by “Anglo-British” historians.

It remains the case, however, that few of the readers surveyed here explicitly challenged the political agenda underlying “Anglo-British” historiography. As a prime mover in a local Culloden Club that

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<sup>89</sup> St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 5; 394–412. Rose ignores them for precisely this reason, proposing best-seller lists, reader surveys and autobiographies as the only way to recover “the responses of the actual ordinary reader in history”, “How Historians Study Reader Response”, 209; see the discussion in Jackson, *Marginalia*, 253.

flourished in Roxburghshire in the 1750s,<sup>90</sup> Ridpath's disappointment with some of the more cavalier narrative strategies deployed by Robertson and Hume evidently stemmed from his own aggressive pro-Hanoverianism. Forty years on, Grant's contribution to the *Statistical Account* suggested that this view had become even more entrenched in the intervening years, with Grant arguing that tillage around Elgin had suffered near terminal decline in the seventeenth century before being revived in the eighteenth.<sup>91</sup> For Grant, 1746 was a crucial year in local history: with the Union and Hanoverian settlement finally secure upon the eradication of the Jacobite threat, "the people awoke, as it were from a profound slumber. Within these last 30 years, their industry has become active, and...has been directed by intelligence".<sup>92</sup> However much he worried about the empirical foundations of Scottish Enlightenment historiography, this interpretation of local history was every bit as "Anglo-British" as Robertson's or Hume's. As the benefits of Scottish participation in the Union became self-evident in the half century after the defeat of the Jacobites, perhaps it is no surprise that deeply patriotic men like Grant took refuge in distant historical controversies – controversies that Rosemary Sweet points out "did not necessitate venturing into areas fraught with political implications".<sup>93</sup> Provincial readers proved far less reticent to confront the provocative party politics and desolate scepticism of the Scottish Enlightenment's greatest mind, David Hume.

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<sup>90</sup> *Ridpath*, xvi, 4, 66, 133, 244, 379; the club met every year to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Culloden with feasting and songs.

<sup>91</sup> O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 103.

<sup>92</sup> OSA, 16: 592–4.

<sup>93</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 159.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### “THE PATRON OF INFIDELITY”: READING HUME AND THE COMMON SENSE PHILOSOPHERS

On 17 March 1846, the judge, legal reformer and man of letters, Henry Cockburn, wrote to John Hill Burton applauding his biography of the most controversial figure of the Scottish Enlightenment. “I have just finished David – and cannot resist the pleasure of telling you how much I have been instructed and delighted”<sup>1</sup> Burton had recently published the *Life and Correspondence of David Hume* (1846), the first biographical work to draw on Hume’s unpublished letters and manuscripts. Although Burton’s work lies outwith the scope of the current book, Cockburn’s response reveals a great deal about how Hume and his works were received in Scotland in the half century after his death:

The Collection of his letters, now, for the first time, put into order, would, of itself, make an invaluable book. But you have connected and explained them by most judicious observations; and have walked over the burning ploughshares which fanaticism and faction will for ever set in the way of any biographer of Hume, with great felicity.<sup>2</sup>

Hume is a brooding presence throughout the current book, as he remains in Scottish Enlightenment scholarship more generally. His *History of England* was undoubtedly the most widely read historical book in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century, appearing in personal library collections more often than any other title and performing consistently well at every lending library for which borrowing records survive.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the *Essays and Treatises* were amongst the most readily available philosophical books in the country, offering readers a digest of his most significant writing on moral philosophy, literature, politics and religion – so that in spite of the notoriously poor reception of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, most Scottish readers who were willing to do so could cast judgement on his controversial views for themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Cockburn’s *Letters*, 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>3</sup> See above, Chapters Two and Four.

As Cockburn suggests, however, Hume's relationship with his readers was by no means an uncomplicated affair. His *History of England* was widely read precisely because it provided the most readable account of England's constitutional development yet written, as we have already suggested, but the subject matter inevitably exposed Hume to politically-motivated criticisms. As Hume famously testified in his autobiographical sketch "My Own Life", he was "assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation [from all factions] English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory".<sup>4</sup> More problematically still, Hume's well-known scepticism and questionable religious views were a source of genuine concern to contemporary readers, meaning that he was often expelled to the margins of readers' experiences – a force for evil and corruption in the world, the butt of readers' jokes, a figure of nonsense and ridicule, the 'other' against whom their version of Enlightenment was defined. Cockburn did not write idly, then, when he warned Burton that "those who cannot be religious without being intolerant will never forgive you for being fair".<sup>5</sup> This chapter examines responses to Hume amongst an earlier generation of readers, asking whether Cockburn was right to imply their intolerance of Hume's perceived political partiality and religious deviance impeded the impact of Enlightenment in provincial Scotland.

## I

Most modern commentators now agree that Hume's *History* was a systematic attempt to deconstruct the great myths of British political history such as Magna Carta, the rise of Parliament and the Glorious Revolution.<sup>6</sup> In line with his empirical science of man, Hume wished to release party politics in Britain from its rhetorical attachment to these myths. Most importantly, he revealed the extent to which accident and misadventure were the normal agencies of historical change, not the alleged divine assistance and far-sighted wisdom that had for so long been read into the epoch-making constitutional transformation of 1688–9. Put simply, experience and observation decreed that consensus

<sup>4</sup> Hume, *History*, 1: xxx.

<sup>5</sup> *Cockburn's Letters*, 195.

<sup>6</sup> The classic view is D. Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge, 1975); this has been revised in different ways by Phillipson, *Hume*; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion II*; and V. G. Wexler, *David Hume and the History of England* (Philadelphia, 1979).

was the key to stable government, rather than adherence to age-old principles like the Whiggish ‘ancient constitution’ or the Tory ‘divine right’ of kings.<sup>7</sup>

That Hume’s *History of England* was read with these contexts in mind is implied by library borrowing habits, with the volumes which dealt with the Stuarts the most regularly borrowed volume of Hume’s *History* at every library for which such evidence survives. At the Wigtown Subscription Library, where Hume’s *History* was one of the most regularly borrowed titles of any genre, very few readers borrowed every volume, with the Stuart volumes clearly emerging as the most popular. Similarly, the tenth volume of Cadell’s twelve-volume duodecimo edition of 1793–1794, which covered the crucial years of the Civil War up to the trial and execution of Charles I, was borrowed by more individuals than any other at the School Wynd Congregational Library in Dundee in the 1820s.

Surviving reading notes suggest that such selectivity on the part of library borrowers enshrined a standard contemporary strategy for digesting Hume’s *History*. As the Newhailes annotator realised in marking up Lord Hailes’s old copy of *The History of Great Britain: containing the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (1754), this was not simply the period when party politics first came to be divided along Whig-Tory lines – “the parties of COURT and COUNTRY”, our reader noted in the margin. The modern British polity itself owed its existence to the contest between crown and Parliament narrated by Hume with such unparalleled elegance:

I have no hesitation in saying that but for the private character of the Kings of the House of Stuart & James at the head of them, we had not now enjoyed the Constitution which thro’ God’s blessing has now been bequeathed to us, & which thro’ the same, we trust & hope to convey to our Children & our Children’s Children.<sup>8</sup>

David Boyle, too, limited his engagement with Hume to the Stuart volumes, ostensibly to become more familiar with the broad contours of English political, constitutional and cultural development. In this instance, however, it is clear that the exercise also served to consolidate Boyle’s nascent Whiggish instincts. Unusually, he picked out precisely

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<sup>7</sup> The wider context of partisan historiography in which Hume’s *History* appeared is best summarised in Hicks, *Neoclassical History*.

<sup>8</sup> NLS Nha.A75, Hume, *History*, 79; 107.



the theme elaborated by modern commentators, acknowledging that Hume's narrative illuminated the "wonderful degree of party spirit displayed on both sides". Boyle condemned "that pretended sanctity under the veil of the deepest hypocrisy" that influenced men of all parties under the Stuarts, further reflecting that it "is most astonishing how easily were the people in those days deluded by the most glaring absurdities". Nevertheless, he thought that Hume had failed in his self-imposed task of bringing impartiality to the history of England, lamenting that Hume had been "unable altogether to conceal his partiality for the Royal cause, which...ought to be guarded against by every honest and candid historian".<sup>9</sup>

This was by no means an unusual response to Hume's politics. Indeed, Hume provocatively acknowledged that it was one seemingly endorsed by the revisions he made to subsequent editions; "that in above a hundred alterations, which farther study, reading, or reflection engaged me to make in the reigns of the two first Stuarts, I have made all of them invariably to the Tory side".<sup>10</sup> James Forbes, an expatriate Scot in the service of the East India Company, founded his own Whiggish critique of Hume's politics explicitly in the wider historiographical polemics, transcribing

A remark I have since met with in Stuart's View of Society in Europe; which struck me as very just, especially when we compare Hume's annals of the Stuarts with Mrs Macaulay's history of those monarchs. – "Mr Hume, struck with the talents of Dr [Robert] Brady, deceived by his ability, disposed to pay adulation to government; or willing to profit by a system, formed with art, and ready for adoption, has executed his history upon the tenets of this writer – yet, of Dr Brady, it ought to be remembered that he was the slave of a faction; and that he meanly prostituted an excellent understanding & admirable quickness to vindicate tyranny and to destroy the rights of this nation.

With no less pertinacity, but with an air of greater candor and with the marks of a more liberal mind, Mr Hume has employed himself to the same purposes; and his history from its beginning to its conclusion, is chiefly to be regarded as a plausible defence of prerogative – as an elegant & spirited composition it merits every commendation. But no friend to humanity, and to the freedom of this kingdom will consider his constitutional enquiries, with their effect on his narrative, and compare them

<sup>9</sup> Boyle Notebook, 77–8.

<sup>10</sup> Hume, *History*, 1: xxxi.

with the ancient and venerable monument of our story, without feeling a lively surprise and a patriot indignation".<sup>11</sup>

By this time, as this extract implies in its praise for Hume's "elegant and spirited" style, Forbes was already an avowed admirer of Hume's *History*, having earlier admitted that it had "afforded me a very high pleasure and much improvement in the perusal".<sup>12</sup> Boyle, too, eventually set aside his concern about what he perceived to be Hume's Tory sympathies, concluding with all the self-confident pomposity of a teenage reader that "Upon the whole...Mr Hume has maintained all the requisite dignity of an historian", and that "the greatest of men have had their faults".<sup>13</sup> Yet their shared disappointment at Hume's apparent partisanship was typical of contemporary responses to the *History of England* more generally, meaning that Hume's essential message – that party politics in the commercial age should be freed from rhetorical associations with the great myths of British history – fell on deaf ears.<sup>14</sup> "There are always entertaining things in him but not without a great mixture both of trifling and blundering" was George Ridpath's characteristically pithy judgement immediately on reading the first two volumes of the *History of England* soon after borrowing them from the Kelso Subscription Library. In a more carefully considered assessment, Ridpath pinpointed exactly what it was about Hume's *History* that so unsettled him, in spite of its "entertaining" literary style: "His account of James [II]'s reign and of the [Glorious] revolution is, in general, fair and candid, but the detail is often wanting that is sufficient to enable a man to judge for himself".<sup>15</sup> In other words, Ridpath did not entirely trust Hume's apparent impartiality, considering him an author against whom the reader must constantly be on his guard. Moreover, his distrust of Hume spilled over the pages of his diary into sociable encounters with friends, drinking companions and fellow members of the

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<sup>11</sup> Beinecke, Osborn Bound Ms Fc132, Commonplace Book of James Forbes, 1766–c.1800, unpaginated; taken from Gilbert Stuart, *A View of Society in Europe, in its Progress from Rudeness to Refinement* (Edinburgh, 1778), 327–8. Robert Brady (c.1627–1700) was a Tory historian whose works included *An Introduction to the Old English History* (1684) and *A Complete History of England* (1685).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, unpaginated.

<sup>13</sup> Boyle Notebook, 78.

<sup>14</sup> For other partisan readings of Hume's *History*, see Allan, "Some Notes and Problems", 13–6; *idem.*, "A Reader Writes", 212; *idem.*, *Making British Culture*, 206–216; Hicks, *Neoclassical History*, 193–94; Spencer, *Hume*, 254–5, 275–6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ridpath*, 262, 264.

Kelso Library and Culloden Club. On one occasion, when another clergyman mentioned that he had been reading Hume's *History*, it became a topic of "much disputation" over dinner after a meeting at the Library. On another, Ridpath reported a discussion of a critical review of Hume's *History* in which the ensemble agreed "he is treated severely enough, yet not more than he deserves".<sup>16</sup>

Hanna Hume (no relation of David, as far as we know) was much more explicit in her rejection of her namesake's politics. Writing with her husband to warn her daughter about Hume's *History*, they outlined a range of conventional criticisms:

Mr Hume is charged with want of veracity in not telling the whole truth but only as much as serves his purpose by which an action may be represented quite contrary to what in reality it would appear if the whole truth was told... What is called his history is allowed to be an apology for the family of the Stuarts & written for that purpose only. The great deceit in his book is that he does not distinguish between the constitution & administration & so supposes that whatever is done by the most wicked kings or ministers is constitution.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, she cited the other great polite historian of the Scottish Enlightenment, William Robertson, to reinforce her argument:

It is certain that most of the kings before the Stuarts were as tyrannical as they but you who have read Robertson will easily account for their being so. When the king acted contrary to law, the people being little more than vassals were not able to oppose him & the barons supported him for the sake of supporting their own tyranny, but when he quarrelled with any of the powerful barons they pointed out his arbitrary proceedings & opposed him with arms & between them the people were constantly oppressed for the barons no more considered their good than the kings did. Notwithstanding this, the constitution was all the time quite free as appears not only from history & law books, most clearly but from express acts of Parliament then in force & repeatedly renewed in support of liberty & against arbitrary powers: laws could avail little against force. Thus things continued till by the civil wars most of the powerful barons were destroyed or had forfeited their estates[.] Liberty of selling their estates was then given them by using that & by other causes they lost their power which with their property fell into the hands of the people who became

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 130, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Beinecke, Osborn Ms 7733, Letter of Hanna (Frederick) Hume discussing David Hume (no date), unpaginated. There is some debate about who Hanna Hume, her husband and her daughter were, with the original catalogue identifying Hanna Frederick (wife of Sir Abraham Hume, d.1772) as the most likely author. Identification is complicated by the author's use of initials, e.g. "AH snr" and "AH jnr".

considerable enough to oppose tyranny. How does it follow that because the kings were tyrants before the Stuarts tho in defiance of the most plain & express laws that the Stuarts are justifiable in following their example. If the Stuarts had not been as ill judging as tyrannical they would have found out that they had no powerful barons to support them.<sup>18</sup>

In this instance, there was clearly a political undertone to both mother and daughter's reading of Hume: although they have not been firmly identified, the mother and father who combined to write about Hume in the letter to their daughter were firmly established Whigs; their daughter's enthusiastic reading of Hume had evidently been encouraged by her Tory-inclined husband. Hume clearly meant very different things to readers so deeply implicated in either side of eighteenth-century Britain's sharply delineated party political scene, but his *History of England* had overwhelming political implications for one particular community in Scotland – the Jacobites.

Just as John Murray's reading of Hume's *History* was considered by his guardian a crucial step in his rehabilitation from Jacobite childhood to Hanoverian grandee, it is equally clear that baiting Hume's politics was a badge of honour for unreconstructed Jacobites. The Jacobite philosopher and political economist, Sir James Steuart of Coltness, assembled a manuscript commentary on Hume's *History of England* which refuted step-by-step Hume's deconstruction of the mythology surrounding Mary Queen of Scots, probably in preparation for his own intended subsequent writings.<sup>19</sup> Queen Mary had acquired totemic status for Scottish Jacobites in the eighteenth century, as we have seen, and Hume accordingly discredited her entirely. But Steuart countered Hume on every point and his reading of the Marian myth was perpetuated after his death, with his widow making copies for fellow Jacobites in the North East as a commemoration "of those valuable sentiments which formed the basis on which their Friendship was built, and mutually subsisted".<sup>20</sup> One copy, with the simple legend "Queen Mary" inscribed on its spine, still survives on the bookshelves of the Hay family library at Leith Hall – a monument not only to the Hays' commitment to the Jacobite cause long after the '45, but also to the devotional industry of Steuart's widow in disseminating his views.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., unpaginated.

<sup>19</sup> NLS Ms 9367, Notes on Hume's *History of England*, attributed to Sir James Steuart of Coltness; the identification of Steuart as author actually rests on textual similarities with his published *Political Oeconomy*.

<sup>20</sup> NTS, Leith Hall Library, 77.8160, Queen Mary; MS copy of NLS Ms 9367.

Each of these groups, then, brought their own pre-existing values, beliefs and commitments to their political – or politicised – misreadings of Hume’s *History of England* in ways that highlight the significance of such discreet communities of readers to the broader history of reading.<sup>21</sup> That Hume failed to convince readers of his impartiality is further reflected in the publishing history of the *History of England* after his death. Immediately on its release, the *History of England* provoked partisan responses, most notably Catherine Macaulay’s republican *History of England* (1763–1783) to which Forbes alluded in his notes on Stuart’s *View of Society*. In the nineteenth century Hume’s epic suffered immeasurably from its perceived prejudices, superseded by a revised Whig historiography developed by Sir James Mackintosh and Thomas Babington Macaulay. Such was its ill repute by the mid 1840s, Lord Cockburn thoroughly expected Hill Burton’s *Hume* to provoke “a scurrilous personal attack in the Quarterly, and sundry snarls from lesser teeth”.<sup>22</sup> The implications for Hume’s readership and reputation were far-reaching, with the *History of England* languishing out of print for nearly a hundred years before being rehabilitated by increasing scholarly interest in the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>23</sup>

## II

The context of partisan historiography in which Hume’s *History of England* appeared therefore blinkered many readers to its merits; but Hume faced a far greater obstacle in his relationship with a wider readership, his reputation for irreligion and atheism. One particularly sophisticated response came from the clergyman William Cameron. Cameron had studied under Hume’s bitter opponent James Beattie at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and continued to correspond with him after his presentation to the parish of Kirknewton, outside Edinburgh, in August 1786.<sup>24</sup> As such, one might expect Cameron to have been a belligerent and unresponsive reader of Hume, but we have already seen

<sup>21</sup> The concept of “reading communities” has recently been highlighted by Colclough, *Consuming Texts*.

<sup>22</sup> Cockburn’s *Letters*, 195.

<sup>23</sup> ODNB. For a detailed publication history of Hume’s *History of England*, see J. Feiser, *A Bibliography of Hume’s Writings and Early Responses*, available online at [www.rrbld.co.uk/bibliographies](http://www.rrbld.co.uk/bibliographies).

<sup>24</sup> *Fasti*; ODNB.

that he engaged intelligently and sympathetically with the collected *Essays and Treatises* on a wide range of issues. That Hume was a key component in Cameron's self-education is undoubted, but his tacit disapproval of Hume's irreligion is nonetheless evident in places where his note-taking rejects utterly the tenor of the text in front of him. On one notable occasion, Cameron objected vigorously to Hume's account of persecution in the early Church:

Hume says here that the persecution raised against the first Christians was owing to the violence instilled into their followers – but this violence if it was so is not the spirit of true Christianity but the reverse owing to the abuse of it. Christianity neither provokes nor inculcates in the least degree the spirit of persecution. It was the rage of system & disputation borrow'd from phil'y that corrupted Chr'y & raised party-spirit & the violence of faction in the church.<sup>25</sup>

In the original, Hume explained that “as philosophy was widely spread over the world at the time when Christianity arose, the teachers of the new sect were obliged to form a system of speculative opinions”.<sup>26</sup> By not transcribing this earlier passage, Cameron impatiently turned the argument around to blame philosophy for the corruption of the early Church – in the process, alluding to the destructive power of Hume's own scepticism.

Cameron's belligerent treatment of Hume also provides us with a rare opportunity to connect personal reading experiences with writing and publishing activities. Soon after these notes were compiled (probably in the mid-1780s, though Cameron did not date them), Cameron published at Edinburgh a collection of *Poetical Dialogues on Religion in the Scots Dialect* (1789). In the last dialogue in the collection, Cameron created a character named Hippolitus who presents the Humean position on religion, at least as we have seen it interpreted by Cameron:

Religion, I agree with H—,  
Has wrought more bloodshed, fire and fume,  
Than fiercest tyrants e'er atchiev'd  
Than fellest furies e'er conceiv'd.  
A bugbear, clear, I hold her law,  
The stupid vulgar mob to awe.

<sup>25</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, f73v; f75r; f74v; reflections evidently based on Hume, *Essays*, 73–9.

<sup>26</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 62.

In response, Cameron has a character called Theophilus replay his attack on Hume's irreligion in still more extreme terms than he had earlier used in the privacy of his own commonplace book. Theophilus does not deny that many crimes have been committed in the name of religion, and acknowledges that blind superstition was Hume's real target. Nevertheless, he insists once more that Hume (as so often in contemporary literature, "the infidel") has gone far too far, with religion caught in the crossfire by Hume's assault on superstition:

The abuse you mean, I ne'er pretend  
Or to deny or to defend;  
But 'tis a bold and impious crime,  
To brand Religion's pow'r sublime,  
Because a fiend assumes her name,  
And wastes the world with sword and flame.  
As aim'd at Superstition's heart,  
The infidel directs his dart;  
And while his shafts at random fly,  
He wounds Religion standing nigh,  
Confounds them in his parallel,  
Tho' differing wide as heaven and hell.<sup>27</sup>

This published version of Cameron's attack on Hume is far more developed than his earlier reading notes, reflecting the importance he attached to refuting Hume's most obnoxious pronouncements. Moreover, by situating his notes from the *Essays and Treatises* in their proper context, Cameron's deep distrust of Hume's philosophy becomes yet more apparent – even though, as we learnt in Chapter Six, he readily employed sanitised selections from Hume in his earnestly self-fashioning commonplace book. They were immediately preceded by deeply devotional passages on "heresies of the first century" and on "the proofs of the divinity of the Scripture", as well as notes from "Barclay's Apology" and "Necker's Religious Opinions".<sup>28</sup> More pertinently still, Cameron interrupted his notes on Hume to record a page of "Scriptural Expressions", perhaps as an antidote to readings like the one quoted above, a vital reminder of the devotional bases of his

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<sup>27</sup> Cameron, *Poetical Dialogues*, 38–39. Hume's nickname has often been revived, most recently in R. Graham, *The Great Infidel: The Life of David Hume* (Edinburgh, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Cameron Commonplace Book, f65r, f67r, ff71v–72r. He refers here to Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity: Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the ... Quakers* (1678; 7th edn., London, 1765); Jacques Necker, *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions* (London, 1788).

faith to anchor his progress through the dangerous realm of Hume's scepticism.<sup>29</sup>

### III

Cameron's responses to Hume's *Essays* were probably conditioned, however subconsciously, by critical assessments widely disseminated in the public domain. Hume was generally held in very high esteem by professional reviewers who patrolled standards of taste in eighteenth-century Britain. One of the *Monthly Review*'s most prolific critics, William Rose, was typical in arguing that

if we consider them [the works of Hume] in one view, as sprightly and ingenious compositions...there is a delicacy of sentiment, an original turn of thought, a perspicuity, and often an elegance, of language, that cannot but recommend his writings to every Reader of taste.<sup>30</sup>

Such sentiments encouraged readers like Cameron to set aside their concerns about what another reviewer termed Hume's "singular... notions of religion" to appreciate his wider achievements in polite letters. This probably explains why Hume's less objectionable books (namely the *Essays and Treatises* and the *History of England*) circulated so widely in provincial Scotland.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, some reviewers were wary of Hume's irreligion from the very outset, even in its impact on his tremendously popular *History*. Roger Flexman, reviewing the first volume of Hume's *History of Great Britain* (1755) for the hugely influential *Monthly Review*, went so far as to warn that Hume's

treatment...of every denomination of Christians...is far from being such as becomes a gentleman, and may, we apprehend, prejudice his reputation *even as an historian*, in the opinion of many intelligent and considerate readers.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., f69r. I have not confirmed whether Cameron's collection of "Scriptural Expressions" originated from the Bible directly, or whether they came from some other devotional textual source.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from Rose's review of the *Four Dissertation* by Fieser, "British Reviews of Hume", 648–9.

<sup>31</sup> The phrase appears in Roger Flexman's review of Hume's *History* in the *Monthly Review* for March 1755, quoted by John Vladimir Price, "Introduction", in Daniel MacQueen, *Letters on Mr Hume's History of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1756; Bristol, 1990), vi.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted by Price, "Introduction", vii. The emphasis is original.



While reviewers of subsequent volumes tended to be “most flattering” in their praise for Hume’s *History*,<sup>33</sup> some readers could not see beyond Hume’s reputation as the great sceptic of modern British literature and took immediate offence to his apparent lack of respect for their beliefs – with profound implications for his reputation in the long run, as we shall see.

In this regard, the most remarkable reading experiences so far uncovered are the “reflections” on Hume’s *History* that pepper a trilogy of commonplace books entitled “Amusements in Solitude”.<sup>34</sup> The notes are anonymous and identification of their compiler has so far proved elusive, save that they were probably compiled by a female member of the Stuart family, baronets of Castlemilk.<sup>35</sup> Whoever she was, the Castlemilk reader was quite clearly obsessed with the threat posed by Hume’s apparent irreligion:

that celebrated author appears to me the most detestable – & contemptible Historian I ever Read...Thro. two Quarto vol: in which is contain’d His History of the ancient Britons, – the Conquest of them by the Romans – Saxons – Danes – & Normans; there is not one anecdote to give the Mind Delight, or Lead to Rational Reflection.<sup>36</sup>

In this early period of English history, the Castlemilk reader found it astonishing that Hume could not find a better explanation for the development of organised religion, as sponsored and supported by secular rulers. Her extended commentary on this topic exemplifies her sarcastic tone, as well as her autonomous note-taking style, recording her opinions on Hume rather than transcribing material directly from his original text:

The original Cause he assigns, for a Legal Establishment of Clergy, is so outrage even in him, that it surprised me. I expected the common place Kinds, finely wrought up – viz. that Religion was a Necessary Tool for governing the vulgar, a Bridle for managing & leading them in Submission to the civil magistrate. But as this would have been a tacit Confession that Religion was useful & necessary to society, and a well regulated state,

<sup>33</sup> Feiser, “British Reviews of Hume”, 650.

<sup>34</sup> NLS MSS 8238–40, *Amusements in Solitude* (hereafter *Amusements in Solitude*, vols 1–3).

<sup>35</sup> The most likely candidate is Anne, Lady Stuart (d.1821), wife of Sir John Stuart, 5th Baronet of Castlemilk, whose reading notes and diaries (compiled in a similar hand to “*Amusements in Solitude*”) survive elsewhere in the collection.

<sup>36</sup> *Amusements in Solitude*, vol 1, f19r.

Hume considers it as not only useless, but dangerous. He observes...the encouragement of Legal establishments to the Clergy is to make their activity needless – its to engage them to sink into indolence & ease, careless inattention in their business; for the less they do the better – is not this a very fine sensible account of the Reasons of state for a Legal Establishment of Clergy?<sup>37</sup>

If this was not bad enough, Hume's account of the Reformation (an event our reader considered "one of the greatest event of History, the most usefull & salutary to mankind, introducing Truth, Liberty, with all the liberal arts & sciences, dispelling all the clouds of ignorance, error, superstition, moral and civil slavery") proved even more vexing:

Nothing can be more shocking than what he expresses with regard to the Reformation. He owns it to be one of the greatest events in History; yet asserts reason had no share in it – for the philosophy had then made no way in Europe – what was this great Event owing to? – Reason is not allowed to have any share. A Divine interposition never comes within the limits of his plan – Fortune – chance – & nature – venerable names! – oft without meaning, are frequently found with him – But still, this great Event appears an Effect without a Cause; did not the passions, follies, & vices of mankind come to our authors assistance & finish the work.

Can anything be more absurd than this account? – Expressive of the most impious sentiments – devoid of common sense.<sup>38</sup>

By all means, the Castlemilk reader frequently acknowledged Hume's reputation for literary excellence: "His extraordinary talents for History, I'm told, has enabled him to collect facts with the greatest accuracies & acuteness; to give them all the Grace of Eligant [sic] Language, adorn'd with the finest Diction – It may be so". Nevertheless, she begged to differ with the literary critics on the true role of Hume's literary skills, suspecting that Hume's elegant style served to hide pernicious lies behind a veneer of "wit and elegance". In the example quoted above concerning the establishment of clergy, for instance, she concluded,

But strong is truth & it will prevail; in spite of such unphilosophic nonsense, tho' adorn'd with all the Elegance of Mr Hume's acute wit and Elegant Language ... Religion is that Divine Establishment by which we

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., ff17r–17v.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., f19v. William Rose in the *Monthly Review* granted that many readers would not be pleased with what Hume "has advanced in regard to Religion, the Genius of the Protestant Faith and the characters of the first Reformers"; quoted by Price, "Introduction", viii.

are taught to know & acknowledge our adorable Creator, the invisible God! ... Clergy are the Established Teachers of piety & virtue.

Hume's "Elegance" actually constituted a horrifying betrayal in her eyes, causing pain akin to the rape of the heart, mind and soul: "Alas! ... the mind is not only starved by this Celebrated author; but the Heart is Hurt in all Her delicate feelings. The exercise of all her rational powers perverted".<sup>39</sup>

Many of the reflections on Hume recorded in "Amusements in Solitude" appear to have been precipitated by a dispute with a young friend who had defended "The Great Infidel", pointing out that "Mr Hume was not writing Divinity. History was his province". This response gets to the heart of the problem, and provoked an immediate and passionate retort from our anonymous reader:

But the History of Rational, intelligent, immortal Creatures; the subjects of God – the great, the divine, moral governour [sic] of the universe can never be given with propriety, without a proper attention pay'd to religion. For religion is the distinguishing characteristic of Man; ... Cut man of [f] from God, the Centre of Souls! What is he more than other Brutes that perish? – more wretched – more contemptible. This makes it Evident to me, that there is no being a Good Historian, without being so far a divine, as to have a Regard for Religion. And the juster his apprehensions of Sacred Truths are, the better he is accomplished for this office.<sup>40</sup>

It is in this crucial regard that "the Celebrated Hume has failed", for without acknowledging "the Divine Governour of the universe Directing this great Event making the wrath and folly of man to praise him; & their stormy passions fulfil his Councils", he reduces the history of mankind to the history of the beasts.

The war of the Cranes – or the Battle of the frogs is more instructive by far. The History of Tigers – Bares [sic] – wolfs & foxes; making wars upon herds of tamer Cattle & flocks of sheep; would make as good a figure & as improving an History in Mr Hume's Hand, as the History of England – indeed I imagine it would be a fitter subject for that author.

The result, inevitably, is that his secular historiography has no inherent improving value, according to our reader: "The sentiments he inspires, is a contempt for Human nature – indignation – rancour – & painful

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., f19r; f17v; f19v; f17r.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., f17r. The compiler's concern for the young friend with whom she had discussed Hume may be compared to Abigail Adams's comments that his works were corrupting American youth; see Spencer, *Hume*, 80.

feelings of Heart, without one Ray or balancing Hope, or Sublime consolation... His mind is incapable of Distinguishing or relishing the true Sublime"<sup>41</sup>

The contrast with this reader's response to Robertson's *History of America* could not be sharper: "Dr Robertson's History of America has greatly entertained me". Whereas Hume had consistently caused offence, Robertson immediately engaged her interest and sympathy:

Robertson increases & strengthens my faith in Moses account of creation, & the history he gives of man, before & after the fall – confirms my belief of the necessity of a divine revelation, to restore human nature to purity & happiness; and the excellency of the Christian Religion for accomplishing that Glorious purpose... In America, we find mankind in that state of nature, into which man sunk & was reduced by his disobedience of the divine law ... unenlightened by divine revelation, uncultivated & unimproved by human civilization ... the Dust returns to the Dust.<sup>42</sup>

This was not the state of nature argued over by so many of eighteenth-century Europe's greatest minds ("of which we have heard so many fine things said by our philosophic geniuses"), but a state of nature that apparently corroborated the biblical account of man's fall. The prospect thrilled her:

I attended Columbus thro' the whole voyage with ardour. Hope & fear alternate rose – but when I heard the cry, land – Land! – my heart leap'd – tumultuous Joy roused every power – when we struck the shore of that new – that unknown world ... My soul took wing to the eternal world – the amazement of the sailors, seem'd to me a lively picture of our own souls.<sup>43</sup>

Put simply, a polite historian of the Scottish Enlightenment had proved capable of recognising the significance of divine revelation:

The state of the Americas affords a proof in fact of the necessity of a divine revelation; to introduce civilization amongst mankind, and the constant influence of a divine energy is what alone can carry it on to perfection. If we resist this grace, it will fly from us. If we neglect & despise the heavenly call of the father of lights! – he will forsake us, & leave us to ourselves – then woe must be our lot.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., f19r–v.

<sup>42</sup> Amusements in Solitude, vol 2, ff16r–16v; for the relevant passage, see Robertson, *America* (London, 1777), 1: 264 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., ff16v–17r; compare Robertson, *America*, 1: 146, 90.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., ff16v–17r.

Naturally enough, the compiler of “Amusements in Solitude” could not help drawing comparisons between Robertson and Hume: “Ah! Thought I – How amazed would the fine genius of D: H—e be to find all the sublime truths of Christianity; which he doubted of – despised, & neglected, as below the regard of philosophy.”<sup>45</sup> It was not just her positive experience of other historians that made her berate Hume. His literary crimes weighed so heavily that she frequently returned to him, interspersing her comments on other books with further bitter reflections on Hume. The most apposite came in response to her reading of “Dr Owen on the Christian Doctrine”, whom she found a great deal more edifying than Hume: “What could induce the virtuous Mr Hume to reflect the Holy Jesus as a Divine Teacher?”<sup>46</sup>

Faced with the effrontery of Hume’s “cock and bull” *History*, the compiler of “Amusements in Solitude” turned to authorities who could reinforce her faith in spiritual revelation. Besides well known divines like John Owen and Walter Marshall, these included a number of Moderate clergymen closely associated with the Scottish Enlightenment, such as William Leechman, principal of Glasgow University, and Hugh Blair. By extracting suitable texts from such apparently orthodox writers, our anonymous reader wove together a systematic defence of the mental world she believed Hume had attempted to subvert:

Its [sic] beautifully observed by Dr Blair – that the manner in which these divine communications are convey’d by God to the Heart, we may be at a loss to explain; but no argument can be thence drawn against the credibility of the fact – the operations which the power of God carries on in the natural world are no less mysterious than those we are taught to believe that the spirit performs in the moral world.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, the Castlemilk reader’s use of such leading Moderates as Robertson and Blair to counter Hume suggests that he made them appear mainstream rather than ultra-liberal in their religious views. After all, John Ramsay of Ochtertyre frequently fulminated against the

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., f17r.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., f17r; *Amusements in Solitude*, vol 1, f18v. Dr Owen was almost certainly John Owen (1616–1683), theologian and independent minister; *ODNB*. The specific work cited here may have been Owen’s *Christologia; or, A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man* (1677; Edinburgh, 1772), which went through numerous editions in the second half of the eighteenth century at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Falkirk.

<sup>47</sup> *Amusements in Solitude*, vol 3, ff14v, 24v; the compiler seems to splice passages from Blair, *Sermons*, 2: 138, 51.

Moderates' laxness in religion, condemning Blair's sentimental preaching as "spiritual blamange [sic]...with [which] nothing will go down but the ice cream of *sentiment* heightened by the raspberry flavour of style pushed to extreme".<sup>48</sup> The Reverend Forrest Frew, a minister in the evangelical Relief Church, "was perfectly dissatisfied" with the "legal" doctrine espoused by Blair and his Moderate colleagues,<sup>49</sup> while the anonymous Saltoun annotator seems not only to have objected to Lord Kames's thoroughly controversial views on necessity and free will,<sup>50</sup> but also questioned Thomas Reid's propriety as an ordained minister in eulogising a "Heathen philosopher".<sup>51</sup> The compiler of "Amusements in Solitude" even grumbled at times about the apparent flippancy of Blair's *Sermons*:

Dr. Blair beautifully observes, that the sentiments of human nature, expressed by the conduct of mankind both in religious & civil government, established amongst all nations; surprisingly harmonize with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. –

But what he seems to think is the mere effect of the Light of Nature, & the Exercise of our Rational powers only; – appears to me to flow originally from Divine Revelation, handed about by Tradition ill preserved & woefully intermix'd with superstition.<sup>52</sup>

Such complaints are rare, however, and Blair's provocatively Moderate *Sermons* proved popular amongst book collectors and lending libraries throughout provincial Scotland, exercising a strong influence on the emotions of the more impressionable readers surveyed in Chapter Six. Instead, it was Hume who channelled much of the devotional rage of Christian readers, and without him, it seems likely that the *literati* (and perhaps the Enlightenment itself) might have received much rougher treatment at the hands of contemporary readers.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Ochertyre*, 74 (the emphasis is original).

<sup>49</sup> NAS GD1/1045/1, Journal of the Reverend Forrest Frew, 1840, 12.

<sup>50</sup> NLS Saltoun.143, Lord Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh, 1751), 186–7; ODNB

<sup>51</sup> NLS Saltoun.107, Thomas Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind* (3rd edn; London, 1769), 66. Reid apparently erred in alluding to the "beautiful allegory of the divine Socrates".

<sup>52</sup> *Amusements in Solitude*, vol 3, f28v; compare Blair, *Sermons*, 2: 86.

<sup>53</sup> On the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, see Sher, *Church and University*; Sher and Murdoch, "Patronage and Party"; Clark, "From Protest to Reaction". Their Popular party opponents (who did not consider the Moderate ministers Leechman, Blair, Robertson, et al the least bit orthodox) are less well understood, but see McIntosh, *Church and Theology*.

## IV

In her extraordinary obsession with Hume's irreligion, the compiler of "Amusements in Solitude" clearly constitutes an exceptional case. Yet even for more open-minded readers, Hume's blatant disrespect for the basic tenets of Christian faith lent credence to wild rumours circulating about his personal religious views. Rev. Ridpath supported the *literati* on many of the key issues of the day, including their opposition to the unsuccessful motion to have both Hume and Kames excommunicated from the Church of Scotland for their unorthodox beliefs.<sup>54</sup> He took breakfast with Hume on visits to the capital and was honoured when his friend "David" treated him to a tour of the Advocates' Library, drawing his attention to "the collection of Medals, Ancient and Modern, and the Mummy".<sup>55</sup> Even so, Ridpath could not condone Hume's views in the privacy of his own journal. He welcomed uncontroversial essays on taste and tragedy ("good philosophical criticism"), but his view of the essay on trade ("in this, as usual, he finds all the world mistaken but himself") was much more consistent with his wider take on Hume. He considered the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* "useless and very obscure", complained of the *Natural History of Religion* that its "tendency is very bad", while he was scandalized to report to his diary that "David Hume has got printed at London a Collection of Atheism which his bookseller Andrew Millar dares not sell".<sup>56</sup>

Such sentiments may have influenced Ridpath's engagement with the *History of England*, helping to foster the feeling of distrust that characterised his view of Hume's historiography in both the privacy of his study and in company with fellow members of the Kelso Subscription Library. Other readers of Hume's *History* were equally concerned by the effects of his perceived irreligion. The Duchess of Atholl, who was otherwise so complimentary about the *History* in her voluminous correspondence to family and friends, complained about Hume's

<sup>54</sup> See Sher, *Church and University*, 65–8, 73–4.

<sup>55</sup> Ridpath, 19, 250, 143.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 131, 319, 73, 118. The last quotation probably refers to Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, which were eventually published posthumously, and (most unusually) with no printer, bookseller or publisher named on the title page, in 1779. Hume's friends had famously restrained him from publishing the work during his lifetime for fear of the backlash it might provoke, while Adam Smith refused instructions in Hume's will that he should be the one to prepare the *Dialogues* for the press; see ODNB.

tendency “upon all occasions to have a fling at the clergy, be their profession what it will”.<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Rose carefully removed all trace of his scepticism from her self-educative manuscript abridgement of Hume’s *History*, subtly refining Hume’s narrative and ignoring entirely his account of the Reformation. Where Hume had criticized Edward VI’s “narrow prepossession, bigotry and persecution”, Elizabeth wrote instead that “he was staunch to the principles of the Reformation”; where Hume talked cold-bloodedly about how many Protestants had been “brought to the stake” by Mary Tudor, Elizabeth substituted the more reverential phrase “committed to the flames”.<sup>58</sup>

Such was the widespread dismay prompted by Hume’s alleged atheism, many readers boycotted his writings entirely, with his philosophical views appearing far more frequently in contemporary commonplace books and reading notes when mediated through the hostile commentary of his philosophical antagonists. The Stirlingshire seed merchant William Drummond, for example, eagerly entered an account of Principal George Campbell’s efforts “to refute Hume and defend our holy religion” into his commonplace book on 30 November 1814, taken from Campbell’s influential *Dissertation on Miracles* (1762).<sup>59</sup> Drummond enthused that Campbell proved “Hume’s favourite argument is founded on a false Hypothesis”, adding his own somewhat confused gloss:

The plain conclusion from his [Hume’s] argument is that no testimony should receive our assent unless supported such an extensive experience as had we not had a previous and independent faith in testimony could never have been acquired – such absurdity!!!<sup>60</sup>

Drummond seems never to have read Hume in the original, and took Hume’s antagonist entirely on trust because he had so confidently

<sup>57</sup> NRAS 234, Box 49/I/32, Duchess of Atholl to John Murray, 5 February 1762.

<sup>58</sup> NAS GD1/726/10, Notes on a History of England, f12v (cf. Hume, *History*, 3: 196 ff.); fo. 33r (cf. Hume, *History*, 5: 213); fo. 17v (cf. Hume, *History*, 3: 399); f19r (cf. Hume, *History*, 3: 441).

<sup>59</sup> Drummond Commonplace Book. On Campbell, see Suderman, *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*; Hume held Campbell’s response in such high regard that he defended himself in a letter to Blair, *Letters of David Hume*, 1: 348–51; H. Sefton, “David Hume and Principal Campbell”, in J. J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (eds.), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987), 123–8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, ff50v–51v. The phrase “the whole is built upon a false hypothesis” appears in George Campbell, *A Dissertation on Miracles: Containing an Examination of the Principles Advanced by David Hume, Esq; in an Essay on Miracles* (Edinburgh, 1762), 14. The subsequent notes appear to be Drummond’s own summary of Campbell’s case.



reaffirmed Drummond's own most deeply held beliefs. Having listed many of Campbell's "collateral arguments" in favour of miracles, Drummond concluded triumphantly that "he completely silences Hume notwithstanding all his arts and ingenuity".<sup>61</sup>

The patriotic amateur antiquary, Rev. John Grant of Dundurcas and Elgin, also found relief and consolation in Campbell's defence of one of the most dearly-held tenets of Christian faith. He noted Hume's intention "to prove that miracles which have not been the immediate object of our senses, cannot reasonably be believed on the testimony of others", accurately reproducing Hume's argument that

a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as complete as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined".<sup>62</sup>

In Grant's case, however, Hume was not mediated by Campbell alone, but further filtered through the editorial processes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; his notes are evidently based on an entry which reproduced key extracts from the debate between Hume and Campbell on miracles.<sup>63</sup> Though Grant's notes accurately reflected Hume's argument against miracles, there is no evidence to suggest that he actually read them in the original. Moreover, while he was willing to reproduce Hume's side of the debate in his commonplace book, he remained convinced that "Dr Campbell successfully shows the fallacy of this argument by another single one" and spent even longer clarifying Campbell's proof – again, exactly as it appeared in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Seed merchant and nurseryman William Drummond demonstrates how another major philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment could be deployed by contemporary readers as a bulwark for the most fundamental building blocks of their mental world. Drummond was evidently horrified by Hume's attempt "to prove by the evidence of reason that there was no evidence in reasoning", as this time filtered through the arguments of Hume's most eminent opponent Thomas Reid:

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., f. 51v.

<sup>62</sup> NAS GD248/614/1, Notes from reading, miscellaneous notes of John Grant, minister of Dundurcas and Elgin, unpaginated. Grant quoted directly from the article on "Abridgement", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1: 22.

<sup>63</sup> On the relationship between commonplaceing and the new encyclopedias, Yeo, "Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*", 157–75.

Mr Hume's argument is this; judgement and reasoning resolve themselves into conception, or the mere formation of arbitrary and fanciful ideas. And to make the matter very clear, he tells us in treatise of human nature, that an opinion or belief may most accurately be defined a lively idea related to or associated to a present impression.

This Drummond utterly dismissed as, in Reid's phrase, "nothing but unintelligible explanations and self contradictory assertions", adding in his own words that "scepticism takes its origin from a complete misapprehension of the nature of reasoning; which of necessity must rest upon some foundation something must be taken for granted which is called a first principle or an intuitive truth". Reid's response was instantly comforting:

Dr Reid establishes the authority of the five senses very successfully[.]

The means according to Reid by which we may know first principles to be true or false are 1st To shew that a first principle stands upon the same footing of others which we implicitly admit. 2nd The proof ad absurdum by shewing the inconsistencies that would result from rejecting it. 3rd Proving that the principle in question has had the consent of all ages and nations. 4th Shewing that it has had a place in the human mind from the earliest infancy. 5th That it influences our practise.<sup>64</sup>

Paymaster Andrew Douglas also focused on the crucial issue of human perception in a list of "Propositions contest by Dr Beattie" transcribed into his own voluminous commonplace books. Having already dispatched Descartes, Malebranche, Locke and Berkeley, Douglas turned in much more detail to Beattie's treatment of Hume. The basic argument that "All our perceptions are from Impressions, and Ideas copied from Impressions" was easily enough dealt with. Having conceded with Beattie that this was "true in general", Douglas eagerly followed

how in the Anatomy of the human mind [it] is a secondary consideration: Previous is the desire which prompts the infant to search for the mothers [sic] breast...: there nature has implanted a craving instinct prior to external impressions or ideas".

Douglas noted Beattie's demolition of each succeeding proposition with increasing enthusiasm, drawn in by the scathing sarcasm of his

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<sup>64</sup> Drummond Commonplace Book, ff15r–17r; here Drummond summarises Reid, *Active Powers*, 6; and Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, 550. For positive responses to Reid's philosophy in England, see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 146–7.

arguments. On Hume's proposition "That an idea differs only from its corresponding impression in being weaker, but in other respects is not only similar but the same", Douglas noted in his own words "My Idea of an Ass does not confound my hearing – the near bray of an ass might". In response to Hume's suggestion that "All Ideas of solid objects are equal in magnitude & solidity to the Objects themselves", he gleefully retorted "when he can prove he may pay the national debt with a guinea, ... he from being a lucky chargees des affair may be beneficially promoted to be First Lord of the Treasury". In riposte to Hume's controversial view of the self, Douglas posed the question "is not this more like the language of a big infant than of a philosopher", and he concluded his account of Beattie's duel with the sceptics with one final proposition of Hume's:

6th: The soul is only a bundle of perceptions

Ans: Pray, where is the percipient? Has Mr Hume mislaid his? It may be so – yet still it may exist – and may God have mercy on it. Prior's three blue beans etc is as learned – & more comic than Hume's Bundle<sup>65</sup>

Thus Douglas was yet another contemporary reader who took delight in belittling Hume's philosophy without apparently reading any of his works. He nevertheless identified thoroughly with Hume's Scottish antagonists, and entered the fray with his own extemporaneous criticisms of the pernicious influence of Hume's rhetorical skill:

There may be some art in endeavouring to establish unintelligible maxims, whereon to found sophistical arguments & false conclusions, but it is absurd & awkward for a philosopher to play off axioms which are obviously false or nonsense.

Moreover, in a vicious endnote written largely in his own words Douglas made plain exactly why it was so important to resist Hume's attempt to undermine the whole edifice of Christian belief: "To endeavour to overturn the plainest principles of human knowledge, to subvert the foundations of morality & religion is *philosophically playing the*

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<sup>65</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, vol 2, f130v. Throughout this section Douglas produces his own colourful interpretation of Beattie, *Essay on Truth*, 265–7. Douglas's note on the 6th proposition probably alludes to the English poet Matthew Prior (1664–1721), who used the phrase "Tis Three blue Beans in One blue Bladder" in satirising scholarly rivalry between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in "Alma, or the Progress of the Mind in Three Cantos", in *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2 vols (London, 1721), 2: 26.

*Devil. If the Devil had given Eve such an insipid Hume apple, she would have spit it in his face*".<sup>66</sup>

Similar themes emerge in the letter written by Hanna Hume and her unnamed husband to rescue their daughter from her youthful and naïve enthusiasm for Hume's *History*. Quite apart from their concerns about Hume's political intentions, they warn that the *History* cannot be considered independently from what they call his "diabolical" philosophy, assuring her that she will "detest him as a philosopher" for endeavouring "to overturn natural & revealed religion & all morality & to establish atheism":

His favourite doctrine is that we have no knowledge of anything not even from the evidence of our sense. We are mistaken when we fancy that we see, hear, feel etc. He says if you pretend to know or believe anything you are fools & then adds as impudently as absurdly that he knows with the utmost certainty that his own opinions are true. You will doubt whether he is mad or wicked.<sup>67</sup>

To reinforce their point, they tell their daughter to read Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, citing the very pages in which Beattie dealt most energetically with Hume's scepticism. In fact, at no stage is there any suggestion that the correspondents had actually read any of Hume's philosophical works, and the recipient of the letter was expressly forbidden from consulting Hume in the original – being authorised instead to read "five or six pages" only of Beattie's safely orthodox account. Moreover, the parents' belligerent reading of Hume's philosophy was entirely contingent on Beattie's exposition of his ideas in the "essay on truth & immutability" (which, they say, their daughter can borrow "from a circulating library in London"). The mother admitted as much, conceding

I did not compare the quotations with the original because I could not suppose any man so foolish as to quote the words of a living author & refer you to the page where they are to be found if the quotations were not true. He does not quote the meaning of Mr Hume's words but the words themselves.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Douglas Commonplace Book, f131r; compare with Beattie, *Essay on Truth*, 361 (my *italics* represent Douglas's addition to Beattie's original).

<sup>67</sup> Letter of Hanna Hume, unpaginated; the anonymous Westmorland reader denounced Hume for endeavouring "to sap the fabrick of religion itself & undermine the dearest Interests of Society"; Allan, "A Reader Writes", 212.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, unpaginated.

Even Elizabeth Rose evidently overcame her own youthful admiration for Hume. Her final commonplace book contained a telling section she entitled “Of Mr Hume’s Philosophy – from Dr. Beattie’s Essay on Truth”, in which she transcribed at length a sequence of Beattie’s most combustible attacks on Hume’s scepticism. In doing so, she relied entirely on Beattie’s characterisation of Hume (his summary of Hume’s belief “that body has no existence, but as a bundle of perceptions whose existence consists in their being perceived”, for instance), without apparently consulting Hume’s original at any stage – even though the *Essays and Treatises* sat alongside Beattie’s *Essay on Truth* on the shelves of the Kilravock family Library.<sup>69</sup> Not only did Elizabeth associate herself entirely with Beattie’s ridicule of Hume’s scepticism, she even emulated the heat of Beattie’s language in indicting “modern sceptics”:

Do they with sacrilegious hands attempt to violate this last refuge of the miserable, & rob them of the only comfort that had survived the ravages of misfortune malice & tyranny! Did it ever happen that the influence of their execrable tenets disturbed the tranquillity of virtuous retirement, deepened the gloom of human distress or aggravated the horrors of the grave? ... Ye traitors to human kind, ye murderers of the human soul, how can ye answer for it to your own hearts.<sup>70</sup>

This represents the most dramatic extract in Elizabeth Rose’s entire life of reading, giving full reign to the bombastic language of a writer whom she had once met in person and who clearly remained an important influence on all her reading experiences.<sup>71</sup> She fervently believed in the power of books to fill her “mind with truth” and, as we know, was

<sup>69</sup> Rose Extracts, 1806, 75 ff. In this instance, Elizabeth Rose quoted directly from Beattie, *Essay on Truth*, 266. NAS GD125 Box 1, Kilravock Library Catalogue, 1783.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 76–7, quoting directly from Beattie, *Essay on Truth*, 526 ff.

<sup>71</sup> On the controversy caused by Hume’s infidelity, Sher points out that “when harsher language was used, as in Beattie’s *Essay on Truth*, there was controversy and concern about whether the bounds of politeness had been overstepped”; *Enlightenment and the Book*, 146. As early as 1771, Mackenzie had written to Rose defending Beattie’s impoliteness: “I read Dr Beattie’s Book with Pleasure as well as Instruction, tho’ I have been a little prejudiced against it by some Critics, for whose Opinions I have great Respect, & to whose Judgements I am under Obligation. They found Fault with the Treatment David Hume had met with in that Performance, & branded the Essay with Scurrility to that Gentleman as a Man, & with Ignorance of his Philosophy as an Author: but I confess I cannot subscribe to this opinion, tho’ I think there are a few Passages which might have been soften’d down on a Revisal, tho’ they might easily escape the Writer in the Ardor of Composition. There is a new Edition advertised, with a Postscript, which may possibly relate to this Objection, but I have not yet happen’d to meet with it”; *Mackenzie’s Letters*, 81–2.

utterly devoted to the moral education of her “infant son to truth”.<sup>72</sup> She may have used the term “truth” on both occasions in homage to Beattie’s *Essay on Truth* and she transcribed his final statement of the importance of the task in which he was engaged as a mission statement for her own life of reading: “It is time for Truth to vindicate her rights, & we trust they shall be yet completely vindicated”.<sup>73</sup>

Predictably, Rev. Cameron also turned to his former mentor Beattie when he came to ruminate on the dangers that scepticism posed for the modern world. Though he was happy to treat Hume as a trusted authority on some matters of self-fashioning, “The Great Infidel” came eventually to cast a long shadow over Cameron’s thinking. This much is clear from “Verses written on reading Dr Beattie’s ‘Essay on Truth’”, which Cameron composed in 1806, when he too was in his late fifties and presumably contemplating his own future prospects. Cameron starts by acknowledging the status of British letters in the modern world, putting his own spin on the “new-created light” of Edinburgh for which “all the nations sound applausive noise”.<sup>74</sup> He rhetorically questions Beattie’s impolite attack on Hume, asking “Why wakes O Beattie, thy discordant voice, to damp the general joy, to rouse alarms of treason, rapine, blood-besprinkled arms?” But Beattie, Cameron believes, will have his day: “Thy voice O Beattie, shall be heard at last, As wak’d by Truth in energetic strain, Her injured rights & honours to maintain”. He continues, echoing the title of Beattie’s major work,

When wildering Scepticism shall have spread  
Throughout the world her desolation dread,  
Immutable, eternal Truth shall rise,  
& illuminate the earth and skies,  
Like Phaebus, beaming with celestial light,  
Dispel the fen-born meteors of the night;  
Then shall her enemies be fain to hide  
Beneath the crumbled pillars of their pride;  
Thy name, O Beattie, then shall be rever’d,  
To her, to all her faithful friends endear’d,  
Approv’d for warmth & energy of heart,

<sup>72</sup> *Genealogical Deduction*, 509.

<sup>73</sup> Rose Extracts, 1806, 79; typically, Rose transcribed directly and accurately from Beattie, *Essay on Truth*, 530. For similar responses to Beattie by English readers, see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 144–5.

<sup>74</sup> Cameron’s praise of Edinburgh’s “capital of the mind” is reminiscent of contemporary comment by Carlo Denina, Tobias Smollett, and others with whom he may have been familiar; see Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 68.

Disdaining Sophistry's entangling art,  
With mists of Doubt o'erwhelming all the mind,  
Where Faith and Truth no stable footing find.<sup>75</sup>

Throughout Cameron's eloquent ode to Beattie, and almost certainly with the bloodletting of the 1790s firmly in mind, French philosophy is the primary target, with Britain's "new-created light, From Gallic oracles reflected bright". However, the allusion to Hume would have been unequivocal for both Cameron and his contemporaries: accusations of "sophistry", "scepticism" and "pride" were synonymous with Hume following Beattie's sustained and notoriously impolite attack on him.<sup>76</sup> Exactly the same inference was made by the Rev. James Scott, who warned fellow members of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society against "the false philosophy...which, for above half a century, has prevailed much in France, and which was adopted by some writers in our own country".<sup>77</sup>

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At least Cameron had read Hume's *Essays* and was sophisticated enough to assess them sympathetically and seriously. Most knew of Hume's scepticism by reputation alone, and all the frustration, bafflement, effrontery and sheer horror that his alleged views evoked were ultimately reflected in direct attacks on his character. The compiler of "Amusements in Solitude" is a case in point. Coming across Adam Smith's famous letter describing Hume "as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise & virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of Human frailty will permit", she was plainly horrified:

He became the patron of infidelity – advocate for, & teacher of the most abominable & Horable vices – vices, shocking to nature; & destructive to every virtue, & rational enjoyment. – Is this the man of wisdom & philosophy – the man of compleat virtue?"<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> NAS CH1/15/5, Poetic Commonplace Book of William Cameron, ff3r–3v.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., f3v.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted by Allan, "Provincial Culture", 19.

<sup>78</sup> Amusements in Solitude, vol 2, f22r. Smith wrote "One single, and as I thought a very harmless sheet of paper, which I happened to write concerning the death of our late friend Mr Hume, brought upon me ten times more abuse than the very violent attack I had made upon the whole commercial system of Great Britain"; Smith to Andreas Holt, 26 October 1780, *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, ed. Ernest Campbell

This naturally led her into a fully rationalised dismissal of Smith's conclusion along now familiar lines:

I could hardly agree with M. Smith that his Beloved Friend, had attain'd the summit of Human wisdom & virtue. – He falls infinitely below the wise and virtuous Heathens, who darkly but vigorously felt after Truth.

But as a power of Believing is implanted in the human soul, as a sister eye to reason; and Mr Hume had within his reach, The Divine Revelation, made to man of the Sublimest Truths, Teaching the Divinist virtues, exciting us by the most exalting Hopes, to go on towards perfection; – surely the proper exercise of this internal eye, is as necessary to compleat the perfect character of a wise and virtuous man, as the exercise of reason & experience in the most extensive learning, & the greatest Depth of Thought, & Eligance of Language. – Blind of an Eye the celebrated author appears – Lame of a Leg, tho' prop'd by Friendship & all the Grace of cheerfull good Humor – and Gayeity to the Last.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, Hume's "blindness" to orthodox objects of Christian faith made him little different in her eyes to the "Brutes" whose history she thought he was most qualified to write. She accordingly dismissed him as a force of "nonsense":

This brings to my Remembrance a verse found in Professor Hutchison['s] Class one morning:

Three Sages, in three Different nations Born;  
England & Ireland & Scotland did adorn.  
The first from nature banished Spirit quite;  
The second Kick'd of [f] Mat[t]er, out of Spite.  
The force of Nonsense [sic], could no further go;  
To form a Hume, she join'd the other two.<sup>80</sup>

In fact, Hume's staggering unorthodoxy made him the frequent target of malicious anecdotes throughout the period,<sup>81</sup> with this verse, like many others, perhaps originating in the periodical press. Similarly derogatory material printed in some of the bestselling biographies of the age also engaged those readers who were keen to dispute Hume's world view. Naturally enough, Sir William Forbes's *Life of Beattie* provided a wealth of suitable material which eventually attracted the

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Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (Indianapolis, 1987), 251; for the offending document, see Smith to William Strahan, 9 November 1776, 217–21. For an English reader's similar attitude towards Smith's letter, see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 144.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., f22r.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., f.22r; f.17v. The source is unidentified.

<sup>81</sup> Allan, *Making British Culture*, 143.



attention of Margaret Urquhart of Craigston. Urquhart was given the book by the author himself in 1806 and at some point marked up passages for particular attention. Although, true to family form, Urquhart declined to write coherent marginal comments, her choice of passages is highly revealing. Most intriguingly, she highlighted a letter written by Beattie in 1782 to Beilby Porteous, Bishop of Chester, which concludes with a telling review of Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*:

Dr Reid treats his opponents, and their tenets, with a respect and a solemnity, that sometimes tempt me to smile. His style is clear and simple; and his aversion to the word *idea* so great, that I think he never once uses it in delivering his own opinions. That little word has indeed been a source of much perplexity to metaphysicians... It reduced David Hume to the condition of a certain old gentleman, of whom we read that "Fluttering his pinions vain, Plumb down he dropped ten thousand fathom deep".<sup>82</sup>

In the absence of marginal commentary it is impossible to tell precisely why Margaret Urquhart marked up this particular passage. Perhaps she simply meant to remind herself to get hold of a copy of Reid's *Essay on the Intellectual Powers*; alternatively, she may already have read it and approved of Beattie's glowing review of it. Either way, she seems to have endorsed the versified skulduggery that here saw Hume condemned to the fires of hell by two of his foremost Scottish opponents, Beattie and Reid. Hume was inevitably the target of Samuel Johnson's caustic wit on innumerable occasions and at least two contemporary annotators underlined the following exchange in Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*:

One of our company, I was told, had hurt himself by too much study, particularly of infidel metaphysicians, of which he gave a proof, on second sight being mentioned. He immediately retailed some of the fallacious arguments of Voltaire and Hume against miracles in general. Infidelity in a Highland gentleman appeared to me peculiarly offensive. I was sorry for him, as he had otherwise a good character. I told Dr. Johnson that he had studied himself into infidelity – *Johnson*, "Then he must study himself out of it again. That is the way. Drinking largely will sober him again".<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> NLS Urq.172–3, Sir William Forbes, *Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie* (Edinburgh, 1806), 1: 171–3.

<sup>83</sup> NLS Grindlay.244 and Saltoun.140, Boswell, *Journal of a Tour*, 191.

At times, of course, such witticisms may have been collected not so much for their treatment of Hume than for their entertainment value. Even Lord Cockburn could not resist appending “a neat joke on his metaphysicks” to the letter to John Hill Burton with which this chapter started; “Within this circular idea, Called commonly a tomb, Th'impressions and ideas lie, That constituted Hume.”<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, many satires explicitly sought to exile Hume from polite culture altogether. One such attack on Hume circulated widely in mid-eighteenth-century Scotland, this time posing as an addition to Hume's *Essays and Treatises*. It was clearly modelled on his satirical “Character of Sir Robert Walpole”, which first appeared in 1742, and revealed intimate knowledge of Hume's other essays (for example, mocking Hume's insistence that he was an “Ambassador from the Dominions of Learning to those of Conversation”).<sup>85</sup>

#### ESSAY XIII Character of the author of the Essays

Mr Home Author of the Essays & Ambassador extra-ordinary from the Republick of Letters to the Common-wealth of Petticoats, a person of great Abilities, but no Genius; of some Judgment, but no Invention; of vast Reading but no Taste. His Stile is smooth, not easy, proper, not elegant, concise not lively. His Reflections are more uncommon than natural; more curious than useful. His writings are larger than his Fame, his Fame less than his Vanity. He would have merited more Praise, had he never been an Author tho' it must be confessed, he would have made a good Schoolmaster. As a Man I love him, as he is a Pedant I pity him; and as he affects to be a Critick & a Man of Mode, I despise & laugh at him. With many Faults and few Excellencies to atone for them, he has incurred the Displeasure of the Ladys, instead of gaining their Favour. I would therefore advise him to retire from their Court to his Brother's House at Ninewells, where he may pass the Remainder of his Days in Solitude and obtruse Speculations.<sup>86</sup>

Versions of this sketch survive in at least four archival collections in Scotland, in six separate hands and a number of different formats; David Melville, 6th Earl of Leven (1722–1802), even transcribed an

<sup>84</sup> *Cockburn Letters*, 195.

<sup>85</sup> Its similarity to Hume's essay on the character of Sir Robert Walpole, which was withdrawn from the collected *Essays and Treatises* in 1770, was noted by at least one contemporary, see NAS GD18/5143, Character of David Hume; Hume, *Essays*, 574–6. The quotation is taken from Hume's “Of Essay-Writing”, which appeared only in the second volume of the *Essay, Moral and Political* (Edinburgh, 1742); *Essays*, 535. It constitutes a crucial contemporary definition of polite sociability; Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, 123–4.

<sup>86</sup> NAS GD26/13/279, Essay on the Character of David Hume.

abridged version into the end pages of his own copy of the *Essays*, directly following Hume's character assassination on Walpole.<sup>87</sup> Though the original source has yet to be identified (it may well have been one of the more ephemeral newspapers), such wide distribution illustrates the popularity of the sentiments it expressed. In all extant versions, Hume's notorious predilection for female company was ridiculed ruthlessly as a prelude to a thorough debunking of his literary fame. In the process, Hume's *Essays* were tarnished with the very literary qualities he was so keen to condemn; pedantry, bad taste and inelegance.

## VI

Clearly, the tendency of such malicious anecdotalising was to marginalise Hume's significance for the mental world readers inhabited in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland. This comes as no surprise. Scholars working on broader aspects of Scottish social, cultural and religious history in this period have demonstrated that Scotland remained a deeply religious country and many considered Hume to have gone beyond the pale.<sup>88</sup> Certainly that seemed the case when Hume was at the height of his powers in the 1750s, with leading figures attempting to excommunicate him from the Church of Scotland and successfully blocking his election to two lectureships, first at Edinburgh and then at Glasgow, on the basis of his alleged atheism and well-known scepticism.<sup>89</sup> With Britain's social and moral cohesion coming under increasing strain towards the end of the century, particularly as French Revolutionary bloodletting intensified through the 1790s, many readers felt compelled to resist Hume proactively in their

<sup>87</sup> Leven's copy of Hume's *Essays* is now held in a private collection; compare NAS GD18/5143 and Edinburgh University Library La.11.451/2. Copies in two different hands (one has been authenticated as the hand of Sir Robert Strange (1721–1792), a staunch Jacobite and one of the leading engravers of the period) have also been discovered at NLS MS 14258, ff29–30, transcribed by M. A. Stewart for James Fieser (ed.), *Early Responses to Hume's Life and Reputation I* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn; Bristol, 2005), 5–6.

<sup>88</sup> Smout, "Born again at Cambuslang"; Brown, *Religion and Society*; Brown, *Social History of Religion*. An interesting English comparison is detailed in Allan, "Opposing Enlightenment". For published responses in England, see I. Rivers, "Responses to Hume on Religion by Anglicans and Dissenters", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52 (2001).

<sup>89</sup> Emerson, "The 'affair' at Edinburgh and the 'project' at Glasgow".

own right – going out of their way to castigate Hume and disprove his sceptical world view, even if they had not actually read him.

Writing with characteristic poise in the 1840s, Lord Cockburn posed the “real question...whether, *religion and his [Hume’s] speculations being properly understood*, these two be at all inconsistent”.<sup>90</sup> The previous generation of Scottish readers for the most part displayed neither the capacity nor, still more significantly, the patience to understand Hume on his own terms – even when they had ready access to his principal philosophical works. In the process, however, they tended to identify themselves squarely with the more religiously orthodox wing of the Scottish Enlightenment, enlisting the Common Sense philosophers Thomas Reid, George Campbell and James Beattie to man the barricades against “The Great Infidel” Hume. In whole-heartedly banishing Hume’s scepticism from their intellectual lives, contemporary readers therefore formulated their own brand of Enlightenment that was fundamentally different from the Scottish Enlightenment as it is often described in modern scholarship.

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<sup>90</sup> Cockburn’s *Letters*, 105.

## CONCLUSION

### “IMPROVED AND ENLIGHTENED BY READING”: A PROVINCIAL ENLIGHTENMENT?

Robert Darnton suggests that historical reading is “both familiar and foreign, it is an activity that we share with our ancestors yet that never can be the same as what they experienced”. The conventional ‘great men’ approach to intellectual history thus depends on “the illusion of stepping outside of time in order to make contact with authors who lived centuries ago”, without recognising that our responses to them “cannot be the same as that of readers in the past”.<sup>1</sup> Darnton’s insight applies especially well to recent, sometimes quite vitriolic, arguments regarding the nature, extent and diffusion of the Scottish Enlightenment. Even authors who have had the greatest impact on posterity like Adam Smith and David Hume meant something quite different to contemporary readers than they mean to us today. Though their ideas are still held to be of immense relevance to the modern world, this book has argued that we need to reconstruct how they were read by contemporaries in order to understand the intellectual culture of which they were a part.

## I

The experiences of provincial readers tell us a great deal about what the Scottish Enlightenment was, who was involved in it and how far it extended, to paraphrase George Elder Davie, beyond the drawing rooms of New Town Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> Though it arose in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, the heartlands of Enlightenment culture in provincial Scotland were the towns that were becoming an increasingly prominent feature of Lowland Scotland – spreading geographically from Border towns like Kelso, Hawick and Selkirk, across to Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Wigtown and Ayr in the south west, taking in

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<sup>1</sup> Darnton, “First Steps”, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Davie, *Passion for Ideas*, 1.

ever-expanding industrial towns in the central belt such as Kilmarnock, Paisley, Dundee and Greenock, incorporating traditional county towns serving substantial rural hinterlands like Perth, Forfar and Cupar, and stretching as far north as Inverness, Peterhead, Wick, Orkney and Shetland. The values that have come to define the 'cultural' interpretation of the Scottish Enlightenment had an important impact on intellectual culture in such towns, with associational libraries becoming the focus for the patriotic sociability of country lairds and tenant farmers, as well as urban professionals, merchants, manufacturers and tradesmen. Their fervent support for such associational ventures often went hand in hand with elaborate boasts about their valuable contribution to local affairs in what can be seen as a self-conscious attempt to imitate and emulate the more effortless clubbability of the metropolitan *literati*.

The professional classes were in the vanguard, with lawyers, surgeons, physicians and clergymen of all denominations dominating subscription lists for associational libraries, taking a leading role in their foundation and proving the most responsive readers of all. They were supported by the landed elite who eagerly rushed to patronise the Scottish Enlightenment, providing the purchasing power to underpin its material profitability as a publishing phenomenon, underwriting its expansive plans to improve Scotland and keeping a benevolent eye on the financial viability of associational libraries. Moreover, genteel men and women were often the most capable readers, blessed as they were with the leisure time, easy access to books and educational opportunities needed to read widely, understand difficult material and thereby engage with such challenging authors as Hume, Reid and Smith.

Women were particularly important as readers and interpreters of Enlightenment writings, in spite of scholarly assertions that the Scottish Enlightenment

was a movement dominated by men. In Scotland women shone only in the drawing room, at the keyboard and in the writing of poems and songs. They were in the background and hardly formed any part of the intellectual gatherings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R. L. Emerson, "The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment", in A. Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), 24. Emerson now recognises that "women formed part of a literary market"; *Essays*, 39.

In fact, women were important propagators of Enlightenment values in provincial Scotland, with strongly matriarchal ladies such as Jean Drummond, Eliza Macpherson, Hanna Hume and Elizabeth Rose recommending some works of the Scottish *literati* to their dependents and disseminating the particular brands of Enlightenment they personally endorsed. At the same time, they often proved both willing and capable of challenging elements of the Enlightenment with which they fundamentally disagreed – not least, the extraordinary sequence of women readers who rallied to the conservative reaction against David Hume's scepticism and irreligion. As Katharine Glover has suggested, "books were not passive objects, but a means through which women could actively interface with the world beyond their own homes and their own social environments".<sup>4</sup> The Enlightenment did not merely require them to become passive "angels", in James Fordyce's favourite phrase, but also encouraged them to become intellectual and cultural agents of change in their own right.<sup>5</sup>

The provincial Enlightenment involved other groups of people not so commonly associated with intellectual culture, especially those unheralded but crucial cogs in the provincial book trade, the small town booksellers. As Richard Sher has demonstrated, the Enlightenment would not have been possible in Scotland had it not been for enterprising booksellers like William Creech and Alexander Kincaid being prepared to publish, edit, market and sell its constituent books.<sup>6</sup> Very few booksellers in provincial Scotland had the resources or contacts to contribute so directly to the production of Enlightenment, yet they were still exceptionally well-placed to stimulate provincial culture. Isaac Forsyth worked tirelessly as a provincial distributor of Enlightenment, running a long-lived circulating library in Elgin, promoting books that addressed the improvement of Scottish farming and leading projects designed explicitly to improve the local infrastructure. Other circulating library proprietors such as William White, Alexander Davidson and George Caldwell may have been equally influential across broad swathes of provincial Scotland, even though their role in promoting the Scottish Enlightenment can now only be appreciated from fragmentary documentary evidence, often limited to a sole surviving catalogue.

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<sup>4</sup> Glover, "Female Mind", 20.

<sup>5</sup> Cited by Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 133.

<sup>6</sup> Most thoroughly in Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*.

Provincial farmers, merchants, artisans and tradesmen with no formal interest in the book trade except as consumers were similarly eager to engage in enlightened activity, subscribing to associational libraries in their droves, contributing to their management and proving prolific borrowers of books from endowed libraries. Where they survive, borrowing records confirm that some of the most challenging books of the Enlightenment reached readers quite far down the social scale. The Wigtownshire tailor, John McGill, chose to borrow Stewart's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Smith's *Philosophical Essays* and Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History* from the Wigtown Subscription Library, along with other works associated with the moral and natural philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Perthshire tanner, James Morison, was apparently even more fascinated by Enlightenment books, his prolonged encounters with Ferguson's *Civil Society*, Reid's *Inquiry*, Robertson's *Charles V* and Hume's collected *Essays* being facilitated by the Innerpeffray Library. Indeed, the Innerpeffray Library, which famously loaned books free of charge to broad swathes of the rural farming and trading communities, ironically provides one of the few indicators that Hume's *Treatise* was actually read by anyone in provincial Scotland. Such facts speak volumes not only for the social depth of the Scottish Enlightenment but also for the intellectual capacity of its most lowly readers, even though we can very rarely say anything about how they responded to the books they read.

## II

In assessing what the Scottish Enlightenment meant to contemporary readers, we have cast new light on long-running debates regarding what constituted the distinctive contribution of the Scottish Enlightenment to the history of ideas. As mentioned in the Introduction, Richard Sher believes that there existed a set of "common values" that were shared by all enlightened men and women, "including science, virtue, reason, toleration, cosmopolitanism, polite learning, critical methods, freedom of the press, and fundamental human rights".<sup>7</sup> Although they rarely did so explicitly, readers throughout Scotland used the books of the Enlightenment to develop or reinforce their own adherence to such values. Polite learning clearly dominated the reading

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<sup>7</sup> Sher, "Storm over the Literati", 5.



horizons of provincial Scots, with readers from all ranks attempting to understand key terms of philosophical, rhetorical and scientific discourse, and diligently familiarising themselves with the historical landscapes described by Enlightenment historians – whether or not they had access to a university education. Many commonplacers made the pursuit of virtue their priority, scouring different genres for advice on moral conduct. Some attempted to lead their lives by the precepts laid down by popular moralists like Hugh Blair, James Fordyce and Henry Mackenzie, eagerly subscribing to the “virtuous discourse” John Dwyer locates at the heart of the social mission of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>8</sup> Readers like William Cameron took notes to foster their own sense of religious toleration, while the Earl of Mansfield was the most powerful of many readers who looked to the past for lessons about the administration of the burgeoning British Empire in the present. Landowners and farmers seized on the literature of agricultural improvement to change the face of rural Scotland, replicating and emulating the experiments they read about to improve their own farming practises, to maximise production and efficiency. In negotiating their responses to such problems, Scottish readers engaged in a process of personal self-understanding in which they aligned themselves squarely with core values of Enlightenment culture.

More importantly, readers in provincial Scotland reacted to books of the Scottish Enlightenment in distinctive ways, drawing on dearly-held political and religious beliefs to challenge their textual authority. They gravitated towards works that celebrated Scotland’s distinctive national identity, whether in poetry or prose, and engaged in discourses that allowed them to make their own patriotic contribution to the world of literature and science. They raided Scottish history for a sense of where they had come from, and turned to Burns, Fergusson and Ramsay to celebrate a Scottish vernacular tradition that seemed to be threatened by attacks on the Scots language led by Hume. Indeed, contesting notions of post-union patriotism precipitated a divergence between metropolitan Enlightenment and provincial Enlightenment, with amateur antiquaries wrestling professional historians in Edinburgh for possession of the Scottish past. More importantly, provincial readers

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<sup>8</sup> “They attempted to mold modern yet moral social leaders who could assert the values of community over the selfish interest of the marketplace”; Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 192.

made their preference for an Enlightenment that was compatible with their pre-existing religious commitments abundantly clear, supporting philosophers such as Thomas Reid, George Campbell and James Beattie who defended the conventional foundations of Christian orthodoxy. Many attempted to marginalise Hume (often in the most impolite terms) from their reading experiences as a profound threat to the moral foundations of the Scottish nation, especially as revolutionary upheaval in 1790s France seemed to reveal the dangers inherent in his particular brand of sceptical philosophy. There were thus a number of important fractures in the “interpretive community” of eighteenth-century Scotland, with many provincial readers resisting elements of intellectual culture as it was produced in the Scottish metropolis.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, many of the most significant and pervasive manifestations of Enlightenment in provincial Scotland were closely related to cultural trends elsewhere in a number of important ways. Books by Robertson, Smith and Blair were enormously popular across the English-speaking world and beyond, and readers everywhere brought similar values to bear in reading them – whether they be patriotic, political, emotional or spiritual. The cult of politeness instituted by Shaftesbury, Addison and Steele contributed much to the cultural environment in which self-reflective diaries and sociable discussion of books became the norm, and the *Spectator* remained a hugely influential force in the literary marketplace throughout the century – especially in Scotland.<sup>10</sup> Consumers in Scotland leaned heavily on developing notions of canonicity in British literature when making choices about what to read, just as their personal responses to books were patrolled by influential critics writing for the *Annual Register*, the *Critical Review*, the *Monthly Review*, and, latterly, the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*. By these means, readers in provincial Scotland were increasingly able to participate in a much wider “reading nation”, so far from obstinately ignoring literary triumphs on their doorstep that they actually relied on the literary strictures coming out of London and Edinburgh to shape their intellectual horizons. Nowhere was this more

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<sup>9</sup> Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class?*

<sup>10</sup> In one edition or another, the *Spectator* was found in over 65% of the private library catalogues examined in Chapter One, and was stocked by 75% of subscription libraries and 80% of circulating libraries for whom catalogues survive; for Scottish reprints, see Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, 313; for its formative influence on the Scottish Enlightenment, see especially Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 130–1; Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 10–37, 129, 143–4.

apparent than in the sheer enthusiasm with which Hume's *History* and *Essays* were collected across the country, since Hume was continuously hailed in the British periodical press for his formidable literary skills, in spite of his disturbing opinions.

Immersion in serious reading, a love of libraries, an interest in books and a rhetorical attachment to improvement were prevalent attitudes and priorities amongst most educated Britons in the Georgian period, and indeed in many parts of continental Europe. Associational reading was immensely fashionable, and Scottish subscription libraries often took their rhetoric, selection processes, organisational structure and even titles from prestigious institutions in England. While they may seem to bear out Phillipson's contention that Scottish intellectual life in the eighteenth century was "meshed into a complex and constantly changing network of clubs and societies devoted to the improvement of manners, economic efficiency, learning and letters",<sup>11</sup> there is no convincing reason to believe that their associational principles originated exclusively in the Scottish Enlightenment. Instead, they may have emerged from wider cultural processes affecting much of the British Atlantic, reflecting the "notions of politeness and civility" – and the rise of associational endeavours of every kind – that characterised the "urban renaissance" of the late eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the Scottish Enlightenment did not exercise a monopoly over the kind of critical, self-fashioning reading we have explored here; rather, it was fundamental to the success of the Enlightenment everywhere. Dena Goodman contends that "the creation of a critical reading public was the project to which the men of letters who gathered in Parisian salons dedicated themselves, a way to realize Diderot's goal of 'changing the common way of thinking'".<sup>13</sup> McCarthy goes further, suggesting that "the art of reading and the goals of the German Enlightenment" were "one and the same. The promotion of beneficial reading habits involved progressive Enlightenment of the individual".<sup>14</sup> Helen Fronius agrees:

Reading had been an integral part of the German Enlightenment project from the beginning. The German *Aufklärung* propounded the belief that genuine social improvement could only result from a progressive change

<sup>11</sup> Phillipson, "Scottish Enlightenment", 27.

<sup>12</sup> Borsay, "Urban Life", 203; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*; Harris, "Towns, Improvement and Cultural Change".

<sup>13</sup> Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, 182.

<sup>14</sup> McCarthy, "The Art of Reading", 90.

in individual awareness. This, rather than social upheaval, would change people's essential nature. The written word was the medium through which this collective self-enlightenment would take place.<sup>15</sup>

Such recent interpretations place the act of reading at the heart of the cultural "project" of Enlightenment in continental Europe, suggesting that the intellectual inclinations of particularly adept Scottish readers like Alexander Irvine, Elizabeth Rose and George Ridpath may not have been entirely unlike those of enlightened readers in Germany, France and elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> All three certainly seem to have used books in similar ways to Darnton's celebrated subject, Jean Ranson, confirming that enlightened ideas "became absorbed in the way of life" of provincial readers across Scotland, as well as in Ranson's bustling home port of La Rochelle.<sup>17</sup>

### III

The Scottish reading practices investigated here thereby inform scholarly understanding of reading and readers more generally in the eighteenth century. Our excavation of reading experiences in eighteenth-century Scotland has profound ramifications for the influential thesis, now rather dated, that there was a 'Reading Revolution' in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. Rolf Engelsing suggested that there was a seismic shift away from 'intensive' reading (that is thorough reading, involving close study and numerous re-readings) of a small number of texts (usually devotional), towards 'extensive' reading (superficial, skimmed and hence more recognisably modern) of a much wider variety of texts (especially newspapers, magazines, novels and other ephemeral print material).<sup>18</sup> This thesis has recently been applied to Scotland, with John C. Crawford agreeing on the basis of his work on libraries in eighteenth-century Scotland that

Book use moved from being *intensive*, where men, and sometimes women, were in the habit of reading and re-reading, with great care,

<sup>15</sup> Fronius, *Women and Literature*, 95.

<sup>16</sup> For the relationship between reading and a putative 'English Enlightenment', see Allan, *Making British Culture*, 238–41.

<sup>17</sup> Darnton, *Kiss*, 156.

<sup>18</sup> Wittmann, "Was there a Reading Revolution"; Darnton, *Great Cat Massacre*, especially 242 f.; DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson*, 4, 16–8.

a few, mainly devotional, books, to *extensive* reading, where many were read, usually only once.<sup>19</sup>

Although most provincial Scots in the last decades of the eighteenth century undoubtedly read a far wider range of printed material than their forbears, evidence of their reading experiences does not support the notion that they were 'consuming' literature less intensively. Ridpath read Hume and Robertson multiple times, quite often revising his initial judgements of books with further re-readings, contextual research and life experience. Many other readers compiled huge commonplace books, carefully selecting material to copy down for later rereading and reflection in ways that can only be termed 'intensive'.

Readers reacted to different types of book in different ways: a controversial text that seemed to undercut a reader's most fundamental beliefs was treated differently from an informative history, while readers were constantly warned against the immorality of certain books – with the result that novels featured very rarely in their commonplace books. Hume's *History* could be treated as all three – a dangerous threat to orthodox Christian virtue which needed to be vigorously put down, a conventional authority that made an indispensable contribution to polite education, or an entertaining romp whose dubious political and moral undercurrents should not be taken too much to heart. The same reader might treat some texts intensively while he or she 'consumed' other texts without paying them as much attention, while it was undoubtedly possible for readers to read a single text both intensively and extensively at different times. Although Engelsing's 'Reading Revolution' thesis may still be useful in summarising both the growing ubiquity of print and important changes in the way some books were used, Scottish sources support Stephen Colclough's insistence that "the metaphor of revolution breaks down" when we consider the sheer diversity of personal reading experiences.<sup>20</sup>

This realisation in turn has much broader implications for the ways in which historians and theorists alike think about the process of reading in the past. There was a certain stability in the meanings assigned to the texts of the Scottish Enlightenment by contemporary readers. In broad generic terms, readers approached moral philosophy for guidance on moral conduct; they turned to works on rhetoric and the *belles*

<sup>19</sup> Crawford, "Reading and book use", 23.

<sup>20</sup> Colclough, "Recovering the Reader", 29.

*lettres* to improve their own standards of taste; they read history for information about the past and, in the traditional sense, for philosophy teaching by example. In this they were guided by critical judgements in the public domain, by generic aspects of commonplacing and by instructions on how to read in an age that famously invented literary criticism. There was only so far that contemporary readers could misconstrue their textual authorities, only rarely – and always in restricted ways – deriving meaning from texts that their authors (and, of course, their publishers) never intended. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the readers surveyed here can be described as submissive readers, respecting the integrity and authority of the printed word and constantly reproducing the extracting techniques recommended in contemporary literature on the practice of reading. Our readers therefore seem to corroborate Robert DeMaria's contention that "texts are stable enough to permit us to examine readers by looking at them", or to use the telling phraseology of the leading *Rezeptionsästhetik* theorist Hans Robert Jauss, that "potential for meaning" was indeed "embedded in a work".<sup>21</sup> This has important ramifications for the way we study reading, for if true, it would appear that we can – up to a point – speculate about why certain works were more popular in the past on the basis of the text itself. Hence the validity (not to mention importance) in Part I of tracking which books were borrowed most frequently from libraries in provincial Scotland, and which were more likely to turn up in personal book collections – to frame the more juicy anecdotal evidence for readers' experiences presented in Part II.

Even so, we have seen that many readers in eighteenth-century Scotland adapted texts for their own purposes and circumstances. They were influenced by relatives, friends, neighbours and acquaintances, whether in providing reading material in the first place or in discussing books amongst themselves. Time and again contemporary readers sought to control the reading choices made by others – whether this be Elizabeth Rose compiling exemplary commonplace books to complete the moral education of her son and granddaughters, the Duchess of Atholl encouraging her nephew to consolidate his political credentials by reading Hume's *History*, or little Marjory Fleming being cajoled to write down thoughts on her reading into notebooks. David Melville's

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<sup>21</sup> DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson*, 3; H. R. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, cited in Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 35.

revelatory moment of Enlightenment occurred on hearing Thomas Reid being read aloud in a military hospital, while Ridpath's discussed his responses to Hume over dinner with a group of fellow subscribers to the Kelso Library. Reading sociably in this manner provided yet more contexts in which meaning could be created, with some readers (most obviously the compiler of "Amusements in Solitude") stringently defending their idiosyncratic responses to books and others (the Jacobite community associated with Sir James Steuart of Coltness, for instance) forming discreet interpretative communities with their own distinctive misreadings of key texts. At every turn, these readers were engaged in a dialogue not simply with the texts they had read, and heard about, but also with other readers in their community – not all of whom agreed with each other.<sup>22</sup>

As a result of the social, cultural, professional or domestic contexts in which the act of reading took place, readers often responded unpredictably to texts, assigning meanings to them in a way that tends not to be recognised in traditional approaches to studying the history of ideas. Robertson's historiography may now be considered noteworthy for his narrative strategies designed to consolidate the Union, but even the best qualified contemporary readers – a critical reader like George Ridpath who had fully internalised Enlightenment ideologies of reading – were left bemused and aggravated by such strategies. Adam Smith and other proponents of the Scottish Enlightenment's distinctively 'conjectural' account of the historical development of human society were often read pragmatically by contemporary Scots deeply implicated in the British imperial effort overseas. For readers such as the teenager Alexander Fraser of Reelig, the East India writer John Drummond Erskine and the navy paymaster Andrew Douglas, *The Wealth of Nations* was an educational text, informing them of alien societies and cultures they could expect to encounter abroad. Such 'vocational' concerns undoubtedly influenced readers' selection of books, most evocatively in the case of Christian Ramsay, the governor's consort, who read Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man* and Robertson's *History of America* on board the frigate HMS Forth as she accompanied her husband to post in British North America.

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<sup>22</sup> Colclough outlines a similar scenario, with George Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) being discussed sociably by a community of readers in Hackney in 1715; *Consuming Texts*, 72–3.

In these instances, the act of reading, whether on a personal or collective basis, often involved “the appropriation of text”, as reader-response theorists and historians of reading have increasingly come to agree.<sup>23</sup> Ironically, this process was encouraged by Enlightenment belletrists who prescribed sound critical judgement to polite readers aspiring to good taste – so that a reader’s appropriation of certain texts was often the clearest sign of their enlightened identity. Thus enlightened reading inherently entailed both aspects of the “dialectic between imposition and appropriation” which we introduced at the very beginning of this book, located by Roger Chartier at the heart of “people’s relationships with texts”.<sup>24</sup> As we can now see, there is an important sense in which the very success of Enlightenment depended on the outcome of that “dialectic”. For compliant readers such as Stephana Malcolm of Burnfoot, the Stirlingshire seed merchant William Drummond and the anonymous member of the Innes family of Stowe, the Enlightenment ultimately constituted yet another form of imposition, with the rigid process of copying notes from their reading by rote producing little discernable sign of autonomous reflection or critical judgement. For others, however, reading the Enlightenment was a genuinely liberating experience, with the speculative law student Alexander Irvine, the Nairnshire lady laird Elizabeth Rose, the paymaster Andrew Douglas and the clergymen George Ridpath, William Cameron and John Grant thinking seriously about what they read and fashioning personalised meanings from the books of the Scottish Enlightenment. Above all, then, this study helps us appreciate the effect of the Enlightenment on the relationship between books and their readers in the eighteenth century. For the Enlightenment – in provincial Scotland as in many other parts of Europe – encouraged readers to become critics in their own right, to select material for their commonplace books that most directly informed their circumstances and thus to understand the links between what they read and what they believed about the world around them. To recall David Hume’s inimitable account of refined society, Enlightenment did indeed convince some readers “to think as well as to act”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Chartier, *History of Reading*, 275–6; Allan, *Making British Culture*, 223. See Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, Ch1 for an excellent introduction.

<sup>24</sup> Chartier, *Order of Books*, viii.

<sup>25</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 271.



IV

In introducing this study, two startlingly contradictory claims about the social depth of the Scottish Enlightenment were highlighted. On one hand, some historians (notably Trevor-Roper, Hoeveler and Lough) deny that the ideas of the Scottish *literati* were at all relevant to the wider population, that they were ignored or, still worse, swamped by “a narrow-minded nationalism and bigoted Presbyterianism” in provincial Scotland. Conversely, some enthusiastic supporters of the concept (including Davie and Witherington) argue that the Scottish Enlightenment should in some way be defined by its eager reception and thorough assimilation “throughout Scotland”. It has been the principal aim of this book to examine these claims empirically for the first time, by recovering aspects of the relationship between books and their readers in eighteenth-century Scotland. It is now clear that the books which constituted the Scottish Enlightenment – at least as it is defined by modern scholarship – circulated very widely beyond Scotland’s three cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, and they were indeed readily encountered, assimilated and discussed by readers quite far down the social scale.

While the books of the Scottish Enlightenment enjoyed considerable intellectual and cultural currency across Scotland, it is also true that readers did not always agree with what they read. In this sense, the rejection of David Hume’s scepticism by many contemporary readers may mean that the Scottish Enlightenment conceived by Hugh Trevor-Roper did not spread far beyond Hume’s study or the rarefied intellectual environment of the celebrated Select Society of the Edinburgh *literati*. Yet by the 1820s there is little doubt that provincial Scots were aware that something momentous had altered their mental horizons, feeling that they had participated in a process of personal enlightenment. Nowhere was this transition more eloquently expressed than in the small manufacturing village of Renton in Dunbartonshire. At the start of July 1797, thirty men founded a Library Society there in the express belief that reading “cannot fail to produce the most beneficial effects both in a public and private point of view”. Twenty years later, their successors – in common with readers throughout provincial Scotland – were thoroughly convinced that they had been “improved and enlightened...by reading”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Catalogue of Renton Library* (Glasgow, 1819).



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## HAWICK: SCOTTISH BORDERS ARCHIVES

DL/3, Records and Accounts of the Duns Subscription Library, 1768–1850

SBA, Yetholm Commonplace book

S/PL/7, Selkirk Subscription Library Registers, 1799–1814

## INNERPEFFRAY: INNERPEFFRAY LIBRARY

Borrowing Registers

Typescript Catalogue

## KILMARNOCK: DICK LIBRARY

Minutes and Catalogue of Kilmarnock Subscription Library (modern transcription; originals in storage for duration of research project)

## KIRKCUDBRIGHT: HORNEL LIBRARY, BROUGHTON HOUSE (NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND)

Ms 2/11, Records of the Kirkcudbright Subscription Library

Ms 4/26, Minute Book of the Kirkcudbright Subscription Library

Ms 5/27, Regulations of the Wigtown Subscription Library

Mss 11/28–30, Borrowing Books of the Wigtown Subscription Library

## KIRKCUDBRIGHT: STEWARTRY MUSEUM

1996/22/04, Diary of David Campbell, Kirkcudbright, August 1823

## KIRKWALL: ORKNEY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

D15, Catalogue of Books belonging to Johnston family of Coubister

## LOANHEAD: MIDLOTHIAN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY

ML/4/1–2, Minute Book and Day Book of the Loanhead Subscription Library

## ST ANDREWS: ST ANDREWS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

CH2/1209/18, Catalogue of Books Belonging to Robert Carstairs, schoolmaster at Leuchars, 31 August 1753

Ms Dep.7 Box 22/7/9, Exercise Book of Williamina Belsches, 1795

Ms Dep.43, Minute Book of the Letham Subscription Library, from 1825

Ms 35220/233, Catalogue of Books in the Custody of William Barclay

Ms LY980/1, Miscellaneous Library Papers (Eighteenth Century), A to I

## OLDMELDRUM: ABERDEENSHIRE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Ab75A9, Catalogues, Minutes and Records of the Peterhead Reading Society

## PERTH: A. K. BELL LIBRARY

B59/38/6/245, List of Books lent out by John Brodie, 1810–1811

B59/38/6/276, Catalogue of Books of Miss Drummond of Machany

MS4, Records of the Perth Subscription Library

## STIRLING: UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING LIBRARY

Mss 21-30, Leightonian Library Collection

## VARIOUS: PRIVATE ARCHIVES

Ardgowan House, Greenock

Brodie Castle Library, Nairn

Craigston Castle Library, Turriff

Delgatie Castle, Turriff

Dunimarle Library, Duff House, Banff

Grandhome House, Aberdeen

Leith Hall, Huntly

NRAS 55, Gordon Family, Earls of Aberdeen

NRAS 102, Grant Family of Rothiemurchus, Duthil and Rothiemurchus, Inverness-shire

NRAS 208, Charteris Family, Earls of Wemyss and March

NRAS 234, Atholl Estates

NRAS 776, Murray Family, Earls of Mansfield

NRAS 832, Maitland Family, Earls of Lauderdale

NRAS 852, Hunter Family of Hunterston and Cochran-Patrick Papers

NRAS 859, Douglas-Home Family, Earls of Hume

NRAS 885, Bowes-Lyon Family, Earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne

NRAS 888, Hope Family, Marquesses of Linlithgow

NRAS 934, Campbell-Preston Family of Ardchattan, Argyll

NRAS 1141, Hog Family, of Newliston, West Lothian

NRAS 1500, Forbes-Irvine Family, of Drum, Aberdeenshire (National Trust for Scotland)

NRAS 1907, Francis I. J. Fraser of Tornaveen

NRAS 2362, Stirling Family, of Garden, Stirlingshire

NRAS 2383, Broun-Lindsay Family of Colstoun

NRAS 2614, Macpherson Family, of Blairgowrie, Perthshire

NRAS 2696, Fraser Family of Reelig, Inverness-shire

Anonymous Private Collections

## WANLOCKHEAD: WANLOCKHEAD MUSEUM

Catalogue and Minutes of the Leadhills Subscription Library

Catalogues of the Wanlockhead Library

*United States of America*

## NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT: BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY

Gen Mss 89/Box 58/1221-26, Reading Notes of James Boswell

Gen Mss 150/Box 27/767, Commonplace Book in a female hand, c.1780–1830

Osborn Bound Ms Fc132, Commonplace Book of James Forbes, 1766–c.1800

Osborn Ms 7733, Letter of Hanna Hume discussing David Hume

Osborn Shelves C340, Commonplace Book of Anne Hamilton, Marchioness of Abercorn, 1793–1800



Osborn Shelves C355, Notes from Reading, anonymous  
 Osborn Shelves C388, Commonplace book of Frances (Scott) Douglas, Baroness Douglas

NEW YORK, NEW YORK: GROLIER CLUB LIBRARY

- \*08.25/G174\179\7Folio, Galloway House Library Catalogue, 1797
- \*08.26/D898/1820Arch MS, Burgie Library Catalogue
- \*08.26/E46, Catalogue of the Minto Library
- \*08.26/M667, Catalogue of the Minto Library
- \*08.26/T971, Library Catalogues of Yester House

NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS: SOPHIA SMITH COLLECTION, SMITH COLLEGE

Ms 6, Mary Ann Wodrow Archbald Papers (transcribed by Dr Alison Scott, Harvard University)

*Unique/Rare Copies of Published Primary Sources*

*England*

CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

- Munby c.74, *A Catalogue of the Extensive and Valuable Library of the Late Right Honourable George, Earl of Morton (removed from Dalmahoy near Edinburgh)...* (London, 1829)
- Munby c.120, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Erskine Esq....* (London, 1817)
- Munby c.126, *A Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Library of the Late Rt Hon Lord Glenbervie...* (London, 1823)
- Munby c.129, *Catalogue of a Considerable Portion of the Library of the Late John Young, Esq. Professor of Greek in the University of Glasgow...* (London, 1825)
- Munby c.129, *Catalogue of the Law and Miscellaneous Library of the Late John Campbell Esq. Accomptant General of the Court of Chancery...* (London, 1826)
- Munby c.140, *Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Library of the Late Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh...* (London, 1832)
- Munby c.163, *A Catalogue of the very Valuable, Rare and Curious Library of the Late Col. James Alex. Stuart...* (London 1814)
- Munby d.6, *A Catalogue of a Portion of the Library of the Late Right Honourable Francis, Lord Seaforth...* (London, 1816)
- Munby d.6, *Catalogue of the Library which Belonged to the Right Honourable the Late Lord Seaforth...* (Edinburgh, 1815)
- Munby d.133, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Rev. Walter Fisher of Cranston...* (Edinburgh, 1829)
- Munby d.133, *Catalogue of Books... Being the Libraries of a Clergyman deceased, and a Gentleman leaving this Country...* (Edinburgh, 17 May, [no year])
- Munby d.134, *Catalogue of T. Caithness' Circulating Library, 1 Albany Street, Edinburgh* (n.p., 1830)
- Munby d.135, *Catalogue of Books, being the library of the late Rev. Dr. W. F. Ireland, Minister of North Leith....* (Edinburgh, 1828)
- Munby d.135, *Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Paisley Canal-street Relief Library, instituted 1815* (Paisley, 1817)
- Munby d.135, *Catalogue of the Books in the private Collection belonging to the Cives and Students of the Divinity Hall, in the University of Glasgow...* (Glasgow, 1821)
- Pryme d.564a, *A Catalogue of the Brechin Library* (n.p., 1809)

## LONDON: BRITISH LIBRARY

- c.61.b.6(1), James Beattie, *Scoticisms, arranged in alphabetical order, designed to correct improprieties of speech and writing* (Edinburgh, 1811)
- c.131.dd.9, *A Catalogue of the Capital and Well-Known Library of Books of the Late Celebrated Dr. Arbuthnot, Deceased...* (London, 1779)
- c.142.b.13, Mary Robinson, *Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (London, 1799); transcript available online at <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/robinson.htm>
- L.23.c.5.(81.), *The Ayr-shire Circulating Library for Gentlemen and Ladies, consisting of Books Ancient and Modern, Instructive and Entertaining to be Lent or Read...* By James Meuros Booksellers in Kilmarnock (Kilmarnock, 1760)
- RB.23.b.3645, *Catalogue of books in the Library of Robert Ferguson of Raith* (Edinburgh, 1826)
- RAX.381.45002, *List of Catalogues of English Books Sales 1676–1900 Now in the British Museum* (London, 1915) [A.N.L. Munby's copy]
- s.c.evans.39(1), *Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Library of the Late Earl of Marchmont [Alexander Hume Campbell]...* (London, 1830)
- s.c.sotheby.4(6), *A Catalogue of the Entire and Valuable Library of the Hon. Alexander Hume Campbell, Lord Register of Scotland...* (London, 1761)
- s.c.sotheby.33(10), *A catalogue of the Library of the Late Sir William Gordon K. B., and Likewise the Medical Library of an Eminent Physician...* (London, 1799)
- s.c.sotheby.36(3), *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late Hon. Stuart Mackenzie, Lord Privy Seal of Scotland...* (London, 1800)
- s.c.sotheby.42(1), *A Catalogue of the Valuable Library of...James Fergusson, Esq. F.R.S. Astronomical Examiner* (London, 1802)
- s.c.sotheby.48(5), *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late William Butter, M.D....* (London, 1805)
- s.c.sotheby.48(9), *A Catalogue of the Duplicate Books and Books of Prints of a Nobleman's Library [Duke of Queensberry]...* (London, 1805)
- s.c.sotheby.78(7), *A Catalogue of a Valuable and Curious Collection of Books....of John Pinkerton Esq....* (London, 1813)
- s.c.sotheby.94(1), *A Catalogue of the Entire and Select Library of the Late Rev. John Calder D.D....* (London, 1816)
- s.c.sotheby.98(7), *A Catalogue of Part of the Library of Sir Hugh Munro, Bart....* (London, 1817)
- s.c.sotheby.170(6), *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Major Gen. Sir John Dalrymple, Bart. To which is added, the small but valuable Library of a Gentleman...* (London, 1830)
- s.c.220(1), *Bibliotheca Gordoniana...* (London, 1736)
- s.c.481(1), *Catalogue of a Large and Curious Collection of Books ... containing several libraries lately purchased in which is included that of the Hon. Robert Dalzell, Esq....* (London, 1759)
- s.c.732(7), *Catalogue of a Valuable and well-known Library [Duplicates from the Library of John 3rd Earl of Bute]...* (London, 1785)
- s.c.805, *A Catalogue of Books.... Among this Collection is the Librery of the Reverend Mr. James Riddoch late one of the Ministers of St Paul's Chapel in Aberdeen...* (Aberdeen, 1779)
- s.c.805, *Catalogue of a large and valuable collection of books being the libraries of the late Doctor Alexander Rose, Physician of Aberdeen; Alexander Gordon, Esq. at Hallhead; and The Revd. Mr. Robert Garden, Late Minister of the Gospel at St Fergus...* (Aberdeen, 1779)
- s.c.814, *A Catalogue of the Entire, Extensive and Valuable Library of the Late Alexander Geddes D.D. Translator of the bible; Author of the Critical Remarks of the Hebrew Scriptures etc....* (London, 1804)

- s.c.822(4), *Bibliotheca Reekieana; or, A Catalogue of the Curious and Distinguished Library of the Late Mr. John Reekie, Teacher of the Greek and Latin Languages, Calton, Glasgow...* (Glasgow, 1811)
- s.c.1396, *A Catalogue of Instructive and Entertaining Books, Which are lent out to read... by William Phorson,... at his Circulating Library, Bridge-Street, Berwick...* (Berwick, 1790)
- 900.f.7.(6.), *Rules for the Regulation of the Dalkeith Subscription Library* (Edinburgh, 1798)
- 1509/1213, William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine* (16th edn; London and Edinburgh, 1798)
- 7805.e.5, *A Catalogue of the Valuable Well-Chosen Select Library of Scarce Books, the Property of the Late John Hunter, Esq. Deceased* (London, 1794)
- 11903.b.43.(1.), *Regulations of the Paisley Library Society* (Paisley, 1802)
- A Catalogue of a Select and Valuable Collection of Book...late the Property of John Earl of Bute, deceased* (London, 1798)
- A Catalogue of the Botanical and Natural History Part of the Library of the Late John, Earl of Bute...* (London, 1794)

OXFORD: BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD UNIVERSITY  
 259.k.kelso, *Catalogue of the Books in Kelso Library* ([n.p.], 1793)

#### Scotland

##### ABERDEEN: ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

- King 77/1, *A Catalogue of Books...Comprehending, amongst others, the LIBRARY of the late Professor Ogilvie, of King's college* (Aberdeen, 1823)
- King 286/2, *A New Catalogue of the Aberdeen Circulating Library... Which are lent...by Alexander Angus and Son* (Aberdeen, 1779; 1787, Appendix; 1790, New Appendix)
- King 287/1, *Catalogue of the [Moir's] Select Circulating Library...* (Aberdeen, 1800)
- L.Aa.A3.Kay, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books...including the Excellent Theological Library of Mr. John Bruce...* (Aberdeen, 1806)
- L.Aa.A3.Kay, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collections of Books...including an Extensive Library...* (Aberdeen, 1807)
- L.Aa.A3.Kay, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Francis Garden Campbell, Esq. of Troup...* (Aberdeen, 1827)
- L.Aa.A3.Kay, *Catalogue of...the Library of Mr. George Kerr, surgeon in Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1821)
- L.A.A7.Abe, *Catalogue of the Public Library...belonging to the Proprietors of the Athenaeum...* (Aberdeen, 1821)
- L.Aa.A7.Wat.c, *Catalogue of A. Watson's Circulating Library...* (Aberdeen, 1821)
- L.Ab.35.A7.Mar, *Rules and Regulations of Ellon Chapel Library; to which is added a Catalogue of the Books* (Aberdeen, 1830)
- L.Ba.A11.Pam.1, *Appendix to the Regulations, List of Members and Catalogue of Books of the Bannf Literary Society* (Aberdeen, 1820)
- MN.10.208, *A Catalogue of the Library of the late John Erskine of Carnock...* (Edinburgh, 1811)
- p.Lamba.Abd.c, *The Constitution, Rules and Regulations of the Caledonian Literary Society In Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1814)
- SBL.1764.NP2, *A Catalogue Choice and Valuable Books...the Library of a Gentleman late[lly] deceased...* (Aberdeen, 1764)
- SBL.1764.NP2, *A Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books, containing... the Library of Dr. Robert Pollock, Professor of Divinity and Principal of Marishall College...* (Aberdeen, 1765)

SBL.1780.NP3, *Catalogue of the Public Library at Laurence-Kirk; and Rules For the proper Management of it* (n.p., 1780)

SBL.1781.NP2, *A Catalogue ... being the Libraries of several Gentlemen deceased, including the Physical Library of the late Doctor Alexander Irvine* (Aberdeen, 1781)

SBL.1796.NP1, *Burnett's Catalogue of the Aberdeen Circulating Library...* (Aberdeen, 1796)

SBL.1799.NP2, *A Catalogue of a valuable collection of books... containing the libraries of The late Rev. Dr. George Campbell, Principal and Professor of Divinity in Marischal College; Dr. James Dun, Rector of the Grammar School of Aberdeen; and several other collections lately purchased* (Aberdeen, 1799)

*A Catalogue of Books for a Circulating Library ... Which are lent to Read ... by Alexander Angus and Son* (Aberdeen, 1775)

*Angus & Son Sale Catalogue for 1796: A Catalogue of several collections of books lately purchased, including the elegant and valuable library of the late Lord Haddo* (Aberdeen, 1796)

*Enlarged Catalogue of the New Aberdeen Circulating Library, ... by A. Brown* (Aberdeen, 1795)

#### ARDROSSAN: ARDROSSAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Sale and Circulating Catalogue of Books ... to be had of William White at his Shops in Irvine and Beith* (n.p., 1780)

#### AYR: AYR CARNEGIE LIBRARY

027.441 (Ayr), *Catalogue of the Present Collection of Books in the Air Library...* (Ayr, 1802)

027.441 (Ayr), *Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Ayr Library Society...* (Ayr, 1832)

#### BANFF: DUNIMARLE LIBRARY, DUFF HOUSE

Sir John Sinclair, *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (London, 1782)

#### CUPAR: CUPAR PUBLIC LIBRARY

L027.04133, *The Laws and Catalogue of the Cupar Library* (Cupar, 1813)

#### DUMFRIES: EWART LIBRARY

*Catalogue of Books in the Dumfries Library Taken November 1818* (Dumfries, 1819)

*Catalogue of the Society Library, Dumfries, taken 3rd June 1835; with a copy of the Library Regulations* (Dumfries, 1835)

#### DUNDEE: DUNDEE CENTRAL LIBRARY

*The Catalogue and Regulations of the Dundee Public Library* (Dundee, 1800)

*Regulations and Catalogue of the Dundee Public Library* (sixth edition; Dundee, 1832)

*Catalogue of the French and English Circulating Library of James Chalmers, Bookseller and Stationer, Castle Street, Dundee* (Dundee, 1818)

*A Catalogue of the New Circulating Library...By R. Nicoll, Bookseller, Stationer and Printseller, Dundee* (Dundee, 1782)

*Catalogue of the Library belonging to the Congregation of the Secession Church, School Wynd, Dundee* (Dundee, 1832)

#### DUNFERMLINE: LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARY, CARNEGIE LIBRARY

*Catalogue of Books in the Dunfermline Library, Instituted 26th March 1789* (Dunfermline, 1825)

*Catalogue of Books in the Evangelical Library, Inverkeithing. Established, January 20, 1802* (Dunfermline, 1822)

*Catalogue of Books in the Dunfermline Tradesmen's Library, instituted November 1808*  
(Dunfermline, 1823)

EDINBURGH: EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

La.III.652, Thomas Innes, *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain, or Scotland* (London, 1729) (David Macpherson's copy)

EDINBURGH: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

Dep.175/94/1, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books...the Library of the Late Sir William G. Gordon Cumming, Baronet of Altyre* (Edinburgh, 1855)

ABS.2.204.049, *Catalogue of the Books in the Town of Haddington's Library* (Haddington, 1828)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Miscellaneous Books; including the Libraries of the Late Rt. Hon. John Thomas Earl of Mar, etc.* (Edinburgh, 1829)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Miscellaneous Books; including the Duplicates of Part of a Nobleman's Library* (Edinburgh, 1829)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of a Valuable and Extensive Collection of Books in Divinity, Law & General Literature, including the Libraries of Two Gentlemen Deceased* (Edinburgh, 1831)

ABS.2.205, *Law Library...* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of Books...* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of Law and Miscellaneous Books, being the Libraries of the Late W. Inglis Esq. W.S. and of the Late James Laidlaw, Esq. W.S.... also of several small collections being duplicates from Gentlemen's libraries etc.* (Edinburgh, 1832)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Libraries of Two Gentlemen, lately deceased* (Edinburgh, 1832)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Libraries of Two Gentlemen, lately deceased* (Edinburgh, 1832)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of Books, Pictures, Plate, Antique Cabinets etc. Consisting of the Library of the late Melville Burd W.S., the Library of a Gentleman leaving this country, and the Library of an Advocate* (Edinburgh, 1829)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of Books...Containing the very Valuable Library of Books...of the late James Brodie, Esq. of Brodie...the Books ...of that distinguished artist, the late Patrick Gibson...a portion of the Library of the late Rev. Dr. Hall* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late William Laurence Brown, D.D....and of several smaller libraries* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of William Ritchie Esq.* (Edinburgh, 1831)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Rev. John Steele of Morham* (Edinburgh, 1831)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Sir James Nasmyth, Bart. Of Posso* (Edinburgh, 1832)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of a Valuable Library...the Property of the Late Dr. J. S. Ramsay* (Edinburgh, [1830?])

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Dr. Charles Stuart* (Edinburgh, 1829)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Valuable Library Belonging to the Bankrupt Estate of Mr. David Bridges, Jun.* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Robert Dunbar Esq., of the Tax Office, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Rev. Archibald Singers, Minister of Fala* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Valuable and Choice Collection of Books ... the Property of the late Dr Arrot* (Edinburgh, 1818)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of a Small but Splendid Collection of Book...being the Library of a Gentleman Leaving Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1830)

ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Dillon, S.S.C. F.S.S.A., Late Vice-President of the Maitland Club* (Glasgow, 1831)

- ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late James Donaldson, Esq. of Broughtonhall* (Edinburgh, 1831)
- ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Samuel Muir Esq. Rector of the High School, Perth...* (Edinburgh, 1832)
- ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library... of the Late Robert Hamilton Esq. Principal Clerk of Session, and Professor of Public Law* (Edinburgh, 1832)
- ABS.2.205, *Catalogue of the Library of David Constable, Esq. Advocate...* (Edinburgh, 1828)
- ABS.2.205.004(8), *Catalogue of the Library of Sir J. P. Grant of Rothiemurchus and of two smaller collections containing a very valuable selection of books in general literature, many of them in splendid bindings, also some pictures and prints* (Edinburgh, 1831)
- ABS.3.81.10, *Catalogue of the Breadalbane Library, To be Sold by Mr. Dowell* (Edinburgh, 1865)
- ABS.3.204.030, *Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Library of Thomas Thomson, Esq., Advocate* (Edinburgh, 1841)
- ABS.3.204.030, *Catalogue of ... The Library of the late George Drummond Stewart Esq. of Brace, Comprising a number of books collected by The Right Hon. Sir William Drummond* (Edinburgh, 1849)
- ABS.3.204.030, *Catalogue of an Extensive and Valuable Collection of Books... Comprising the Libraries of the late Sir John Graham Dalyell, Bart. Of Binns; the late David Allester, Esq. W.S., and a Gentleman Recently Deceased, removed from his Residence in Linlithgowshire* (Edinburgh, 1852)
- APS.1.77.48, *Hawick Subscription Library: List of Present Proprietors of Hawick Library, and Catalogue of the Library* (Hawick, [1810?])
- APS.1.79.28, *Catalogue of Books in the Air, Newton and Wallacetown Library; to which are prefixed the Rules and Regulations* (Air, 1814)
- APS.1.79.182, *Catalogue of the Bothkennar Library Established in 1824 by Donations* (Falkirk, 1824)
- APS.2.82.31, *A Catalogue of the books in the Library Belonging to the Presbytery of Dumfries* (Dumfries, 1784)
- Dry.567, David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, vol 4 (London, 1796)
- Dry.656(1), James Macpherson, *Fingal, an Ancient Epic, in Six Books* (London, 1762)
- Dry.656(2), James Macpherson, *Temora, an Ancient Epic, in Eight Books* (London, 1763)
- F.7.d.15, *Bibliotheca Boswelliana: A Catalogue of the Entire Library of the late James Boswell, Esq....* (London, 1825)
- GG.2/2, *Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library. 1794–1833. With Charter of Erection, Laws of the Society & List of Members etc.* (Edinburgh, 1833)
- Grindlay.244, James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson* (London, 1785)
- Grindlay.291-7, David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1792) (wanting vol 7)
- Grindlay.306-8, William Robertson, *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V. With a View of the Progress of Society in Europe*, 4 vols (2nd edn; London, 1772) (wanting vol 4)
- Grindlay.310, William Nimmo, *A General History of Stirlingshire* (Edinburgh, 1777)
- Grindlay.345, Henry Home, Lord Kames, *The Gentleman Farmer. Being an Attempt to Improve Agriculture, by Subjecting it to the Test of Rational Principles* (3rd edn; Edinburgh, 1788)
- Grindlay.374-7, Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 3 vols (5th edn; London, 1789)
- Hall.149.i, *A Catalogue of the Leightonian Library, Dunblane* (Edinburgh, 1793)

- Hall.193.e.5(1), *Catalogue of David Burns' Select Circulating Library, Brechin* (Brechin, 1835)
- H.6.e.20, *A New Catalogue of the Edinburgh Circulating Library containing twenty thousand volumes, English, French and Italian...which are lent...By J. Sibbald* (Edinburgh, 1786)
- H.11.a.21, *Catalogue of the Gray Library, Kinfauns Castle* (Kinfauns, 1828)
- H.32.a.14, *A Catalogue of Books, in several Faculties and Languages, being the Library of Mr. Alexander Inglis of Murdistoun lately deceased* (Edinburgh, 1719)
- Jolly.408-9, William Crookshank, *The History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 2 vols (Glasgow, 1771)
- Jolly.525, Archibald Alison, *Sermons on the Seasons* (Edinburgh, 1819)
- Jolly.726, James Beattie, *Evidences of the Christian Religion, Briefly and Plainly Stated* (5th edn; London, 1806)
- Jolly.1173, Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (4th edn; London, 1811)
- Jolly.1183, William Robertson, *The History of Scotland, during the Reigns of Queen Mary, and of King James VI* (London, 1794)
- Jolly.2184, David Fordyce, *Theodorus: A Dialogue Concerning the Art of Preaching* (London, 1752)
- Jolly.2290, Walter Goodall, *An Examination of the Letters, Said to be Written by Mary Queen of Scots to James Earl of Bothwell*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1754)
- Jolly.2644, William Tytler, *An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence Against Mary Queen of Scots. And an Examination of the Histories of Dr Robertson and Mr Hume, with Respect to that Evidence* (2nd edn; Edinburgh, 1767)
- Jolly.2722-3, Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1811)
- K.R.14.e, *Catalogue of the Entire Library of the Late Sir John Leslie Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1833)
- K.R.14.e.1, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books, comprising the well-selected Library of a Gentleman of Rank going abroad; the architectural and miscellaneous library the late William Stark Esq., and various other collections* (Edinburgh, 1815)
- K.R.14.e.2, *Catalogue of Books being the Library selected by, and formerly the property of, John Surtees, Esq. Balgonie* (Leith, 1814)
- K.R.14.e.2, *Catalogue of Books To be sold by Auction* (Edinburgh, 1815)
- K.R.14.e.2, *Catalogue of Books and Pictures* (Edinburgh, 1815)
- K.R.14.e.2, *Catalogue of the Abbotrule Library, and Several Minor Collections of Books* (Edinburgh, 1815)
- K.R.14.e.2, *Catalogue of a Large Collection of Books including Duplicates of the Library of a Nobleman; the Almost Entire Library of a Family of Rank and Several Lesser Collections* (Edinburgh, 1816)
- K.R.14.e.5, *Catalogue of the Library of the late Sir J. Buchanan Riddell, Bt., with several smaller selections* (Edinburgh, 1820)
- K.R.14.e.5, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Rev. Thomas Miller D.D. Minister of New-Cumnock* (Edinburgh, 1820)
- K.R.14.e.5, *Catalogue of the Library of the late Patrick Miller Esq. of Dalswinton* (Edinburgh, 1820)
- K.R.14.e.5, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Playfair, Esq...Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1820)
- K.R.14.e.6, *Catalogue of...the Library of the Late Dr. Sandeman, of London, with several smaller collections* (Edinburgh, 1821)
- K.R.14.e.6, *Catalogue of...the Library of a Gentleman Lately Gone Abroad, with several smaller selections* (Edinburgh, 1821)
- K.R.14.e.6, *Pitfour Library: Catalogue of the Libraries of the Late Lord Pitfour..., of James Ferguson Esq. of Pifour, M.P., and of Governor Ferguson of Pitfour* (Edinburgh 1821)

- K.R.14.e.6, *Catalogue of...the Library of the Late Henry Glassford of Dugaldston, Esq.* M.P. (Edinburgh, 1820)
- K.R.16.f.1, *Catalogue of...The Libraries of the Ancient Family of Garthland, of Henry Weber Esq.... and several valuable collections* (Edinburgh, 1814)
- K.R.16.f.2, *Catalogue of the Extensive and Valuable Collection of Books of the Late Thomas Sivright, esq. of Meggetland and Southouse* (Edinburgh, 1836)
- K.R.16.f.2, *Catalogue of a Portion of the Extensive Library of the Rev. Alex. Brunton* (Edinburgh, 1843)
- K.R.16.f.2, *Catalogue of the Choice and Valuable Library of the Late Macvey Napier Esq., Professor of Conveyancing in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1847)
- K.R.16.f.5, *Catalogue of the Collection of Books and Pictures Belonging to the Estate of David Stuart, Earl of Buchan, who died in 1829* (Edinburgh, 1859)
- K.R.32.d, *A catalogue of the Library of the late learned Antiquarian, Walter Macfarlane, esq., and of some other collections of books lately purchased ... Catalogues to be had at the shop of A. Kincaid and J. Bell* (Edinburgh, 1768)
- K.R.32.f, *A Catalogue of Books; being the library of the learned Dr John Clerk Physician in Edinburgh; and of Dr David Clerk, his son* (Edinburgh, 1768)
- LC283, *Catalogue of the Private Library of Peter Buchan, Corresponding Member of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland; of the Northern Institution for the Promotion of Science and Literature; and the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Editor of 'The Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland', etc...* (Aberdeen, 1837)
- L.C. Fol.36A (1-10), David Hume, *The History of England* (London, 1806) (Bensley's extra-illustrated edition)
- L.C.195, James Beattie, *A List of Two Hundred Scotisms, With Remarks* (Aberdeen, 1779)
- NG.1608.b25, *A Catalogue of Rare, Valuable and Curious Books... all collected with the greatest Care by the late celebrated Antiquarian Mr. Robert Miln, writer in Edinburgh...* (Edinburgh, 1748)
- Nha.A75, David Hume, *The History of Great Britain Vol I; Containing the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (Edinburgh, 1754)
- Nha.C180, David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* ([London], 1779)
- Nha.O258, David Hume, *Essays, Moral and Political* (Edinburgh, 1741)
- Nha.V21-2, Walter Goodall, *An Examination of the Letters, Said to be Written by Mary Queen of Scots to James Earl of Bothwell*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1754)
- R.120.b, *Catalogue of Blair-Adam Library* (London, 1883)
- RB.s.420, *Regulations and Catalogue of Books of The Liberton Library, Instituted February 15. 1828.* (Edinburgh, 1830)
- RB.s.927, *A Catalogue of Books Belonging to Beith Library, 1818* (n.p, n.d.)
- RB.s.927, *Catalogue of Books in John Smith's Public Library* (Beith, 1834)
- RB.s.1488, *Catalogue of the Elgin Circulating Library, Containing a Select and Valuable Collection of Books by the Latest and Best Authors; ... Which are Lent to Read, ... by Isaac Forsyth, Bookseller, Stationer and Bookbinder, Elgin* ([?], 1789)
- Ry III.e.17-8, Walter Goodall, *An Examination of the Letters, Said to be Written by Mary Queen of Scots to James Earl of Bothwell*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1754)
- Ry IV.e.16, William Tytler, *An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence Against Mary Queen of Scots. And an Examination of the Histories of Dr Robertson and Mr Hume, with Respect to that Evidence* (2nd edn; Edinburgh, 1767)
- Saltoun.89, Hugo Arnot, *The History of Edinburgh* ([Edinburgh], 1779)
- Saltoun.107, Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (3rd edn; London, 1769)
- Saltoun.140, James Boswell, *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson* (Dublin, 1785)
- Saltoun.143, Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh, 1751)



- Saltoun.183-5, Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 3 vols (9th edn; London, 1799)
- Saltoun.244, William Robertson, *The History of Scotland During the Reigns of Queen Mary, and of King James VI* (13th edn; London, 1791)
- Sund.27, *The Mirror* (Edinburgh, 1781?)
- T.1.f.1, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late J.A.Maconochie, Esq., Sheriff of Orkney and Zetland* (Edinburgh, 1845)
- T.1.f.1, *Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Late Lord Cockburn* (Edinburgh, 1854)
- T.2.d.1, *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books...which belonged to the late Mr. David Herd, Writer in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1810)
- T.2.d.1, *Catalogue of a Very Valuable Collection of Books, being the library of the late Mr George Paton of the Customs, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1809)
- T.3.h.4 *Catalogue of a Valuable Library... being the Property of a Gentleman leaving the Country* (Edinburgh, 1822)
- T.3.h.4 *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Dr. Ross (of Montrose)...* (Edinburgh, 1820)
- T.4.g.1 *Catalogue [in Two Parts] of the Libraries of the Late Rev. John M'Omie, LL.D., Secretary to the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth; and Rev. Robert Kay, Minister of the West Church of Perth...* (Perth, 1819)
- T.4.g.1, *A Catalogue of a most Splendid Library, the Property of an Eminent Collector* (Edinburgh, 1823)
- T.4.g.1, *Catalogue of the Valuable Theological Library which belonged to the Late Rev. John Morell M'Kenzie* (Edinburgh, 1843)
- Urq.172-3, Sir William Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie... Including Many of his Original Letters*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1806)
- x.177.c, *Bibliotheca Sibbaldiana: or, a Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books... Being the Library of the late Learned and Ingenious Sir Robert Sibbald of Kipps, Doctor of Medicine* (Edinburgh, 1722)
- 3.2771(3), *Laws and Catalogue of the Books Belonging to Kilsyth Reading Society* (Glasgow, 1818)
- 3.2837(13), *Regulations and Catalogue of the Fenwick Library, instituted 1808. Re-modelled and Sanctioned 30th December 1826* (Kilmarnock, 1827)
- 5.864(11), *Sale Catalogue of the Library at Newton-Don* (Kelso, 1826)
- 5.1412(5), *The House of Monymusk Library* (Aberdeen, 191[?])
- 1942.10(13), *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Professor Dalzel; Dr. Boog of Paisley; John Penny, Late Writer in Edinburgh; a Gentleman of the Law; and a Clergyman, deceased* (Edinburgh, 1824)
- A Catalogue of Books including the library of Dr John Brown, and a considerable part of the collection of the deceased Dr Steadman* (Edinburgh, 1792)

#### FORFAR: FORFAR PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Regulations and Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Forfar Library* (Dundee, 1795)
- Catalogue of the Forfar Library* (Forfar, 1821)

#### GLASGOW: GLASGOW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

- 856, *Catalogus Librorum A.C.D.A. [Archibald Campbell, 3rd Duke of Argyll]* (Glasgow, 1758)
- BD17-h.11, *Catalogue of the valuable Medical Library... of the Late George C. Monteath, M.D* (Glasgow, 1828)
- BD17-h.31, *Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Late Right Honourable Lord Stuart De Rothesay* (London, 1855)
- BG33-h.13, *Regulations and Catalogue of Books of the Barrowfield Printfield and Dyework Library* (Glasgow, 1825)

- BG33-h.13, *Regulations and Catalogue of the Bridgeton Public Library* (Glasgow, 1824)  
 BG33-h.13, *Catalogue of Books in the Inverkip Subscription Library* (Greenock, 1835)  
 Euimg Add.53, *A Catalogue of a valuable collection of books ... including, among many other late purchases, the entire library of Archibald Duff, Esq, Deceased* (London, 1779)  
 MU1-b.3, *Catalogue of Books, Illustrated Works and Music in The Library of Archibald McLellan, Esq., Glasgow* (n.p., 1839)  
 MU22-b.2, *Catalogue of the Library of Mr. William Muir* (Glasgow, 1820)  
 MU22-c.1, *Regulations and Catalogue of the Barony of Gorbals Public Library. Instituted December 1817* (Glasgow, 1822)  
 MU33-g.7, *A Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Reverend Mr. Alexander Campbell, Late minister of the Gospel at Inverera* (Glasgow, 1765)  
 MU34-c.12, *Regulations and Catalogue of Maybole Library Society* (Glasgow, 1822)  
 MU34-c.23, *Catalogue of Books; being the library of the Hon. Mr. Baron Maule, deceased* (Edinburgh, 1782)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of the Library of the Right Rev. Mr. William Falconar, Late one of the Episcopal Clergymen in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1784)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of a Select and Valuable collections of Books... To be Sold by Auction (by the Warrant of the Sheriff)* (Edinburgh, 1801)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of a Very Valuable and Extensive Collections of Books...the Property of two Eminent Collectors* (Edinburgh, 1800)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of...the Library of the Late Right-Reverend James Trail D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1801)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of The Library... John M'Gouan, Esq. F.R.S. F.A.S.E. etc* (Edinburgh, 1803)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of...The Library of Mr. Hugh Murray-Kynynmound of Melgum, Advocate* (Edinburgh, 1743)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of Books ... The Libraries of Several Gentlemen deceased* (Edinburgh, 1760)  
 MU34-c.23, *A Catalogue of Books; being the library of the Hon. Mr Baron Maule, deceased; ...* (Edinburgh, 1782)  
 MU37-e.1, *Catalogue of Books in the Library of John Horrocks, Esquire at Tullichewin Castle* (n.p., 1827)  
 MU47-g.35, *Catalogue of Renton Library* (Glasgow, 1819)  
 Robertson BF69-f.2, *Institution, Rules & Catalogue of the Orkney Library* (Edinburgh, 1816)  
 Robertson BF70-e.2, *A Catalogue of Books in the Theological Library presently at Whitburn* (Glasgow, 1792)

#### GLASGOW: MITCHELL LIBRARY

- Catalogue of Books in Stirling's Public Library* (Glasgow, 1805)  
*Catalogue of The Circulating Library of David Potter & Co. No. 2 Brunswick Place, Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1811)  
*Catalogue of the Circulating Library of A. MacCallum & Co. No. 31 Wilson Street Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1817)  
*Regulations and Catalogue of the Glasgow Public Library, instituted December 1804* (Glasgow, 1810)  
*Catalogue of the Library and Prints of Mr. Robert Chapman, Printer, Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1822)

#### HAMILTON: HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Names of Subscribers to the Hamilton Subscription Library* (Glasgow, 1824)

## HAWICK: SCOTTISH BORDERS ARCHIVES

*Catalogue of the Selkirk Library, instituted 1777* (Selkirk, 1856)

## INVERNESS: INVERNESS PUBLIC LIBRARY

*A Catalogue of Books Consisting of some thousand volumes... Which are Lent to be Read... By A. Davidson, Printer, Stationer & Bookbinder, At the Sign of Pope's Head, Inverness* ([Inverness?], 1782)

*Catalogue of the Inverness Subscription Library* (Inverness, 1815)

## KIRKCUDBRIGHT: STEWARTRY MUSEUM

*Catalogue of Books Belonging to the New Circulating Library recently established in Kirkcudbright ... Which are lend.... By John Nicholson, Bookseller and Stationer, Kirkcudbright* (Dumfries, 1819).

## KIRKWALL: ORKNEY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

027Y, *Catalogue of the Stromness Library* ([np], 1829)

## NAIRN: BRODIE CASTLE

[Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Historical Law-Tracts*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1758)

Lachlan Shaw, *The History of the Province of Moray* (Edinburgh, 1775)

Gilbert Stuart, *Historical Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the English Constitution* (Edinburgh, 1768)

## OLDMELDRUM: ABERDEENSHIRE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

*Rules and Regulations of the Reading Society of Peterhead, instituted 1808, with a Catalogue of Their Books* (Aberdeen, 1832)

## PAISLEY: PAISLEY LIBRARY

*A Catalogue of the Paisley Circulating Library... which are Lent to Read... by George Caldwell, Bookseller and Stationer, at his Shop, opposite the head of Dyer's Wynd, near the Cross, Paisley* (Paisley, 1789)

*Catalogue of Books and Regulations in the Paisley Library Society* (Paisley, 1822)

## ST ANDREWS: ST ANDREWS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

s.PR5499.S36B2, Thomas Skinner Surr, *Barnwell. A Novel* (London, 1807)

*Catalogue of the Duns Subscription Library* (Edinburgh, 1780)

*Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford* (Edinburgh, 1838)

## TURRIF: CRAIGSTON CASTLE

E5, John Ogilvie, *Poems on Several Subjects, to which is prefixed an essay on the Lyric Poetry of the Ancients; in Two letters inscribed to the Right Honourable James Lord Deskfoord* (London, 1762)

E6, Andrew Fletcher, *A Discourse of Government with Relation to Militias* (Edinburgh, 1755)

F3, David Hume, *The History of England under the House of Tudor; Comprehending the Reigns of K. Henry VII, K. Henry VIII, K. Edward VI, Q. Mary and Q. Elizabeth* (London, 1759)

F4, [Daniel MacQueen], *Letters on Mr Hume's History of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1756)

J1, [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Historical Law-Tracts* (Edinburgh, 1761)

K1, [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh, 1774)  
 K4, [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Essays upon Several Subjects concerning British Antiquities* (Edinburgh, 1748)

Duncan Forbes, *Some Thoughts Concerning Religion, Natural and Revealed, and the Manner of Understanding Revelation* (London, 1735)

TURRIFF: DELGATIE CASTLE

Hugh Blair, *Sermons*, vol 3 (9th edn; London, 1795)

William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India* (London, 1791)

WICK: WICK PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Wick and Pulteneytown Subscription Library* (Wick, 1832)

*Catalogue of the Library of the Wick and Pulteney-Town Reading Club* (n.p., 1830)

South Africa

CAPE TOWN: CAPE TOWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

*Catalogue of Books in Stirling's Public Library* (Glasgow, 1795)

United States of America

BETHESDA, MARYLAND: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

57720930R, *Catalogue of Books, Chiefly Medical, being the Library of the Late William Cullen M.D. Professor of the Practice of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh...* (Edinburgh, 1792)

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS: HOUGHTON LIBRARY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

\*EC8 H1803 808c, Elizabeth Hamilton, *Cottagers of Glenburnie; A Tale for the Farmer's Ingle-Nook* (Edinburgh and London, 1808)

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT: BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY

X348 K574 1746/11/12, *A Catalogue of Rare, Valuable and Curious Books on all Subjects, collected with the greatest care, by the late Ingenious and Learned Lawyer, Sir James MacKenzie of Roystoun, Baronet, One of the Senators of the College of Justice...* (Edinburgh, 1746)

X348 K574 1748/12/12, *A Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books being chiefly the Library of the Right Hon Duncan Forbes of Culloden, Esq.; late Lord President of the Session...* (Edinburgh, 1748)

X348 K574 1749/2/22, *A Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books being chiefly the Library of the late Mr. Alexander Bane Professor of Scots Law in the University of Edinburgh...* (Edinburgh, 1749)

2000 590, *A Catalogue of Valuable Books, Manuscripts, Curiosities etc. Belonging to the Deceased Mr James Cummyng, Keeper of the Lyon Records and Secretary to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries* (Edinburgh, 1793)

2000 62, *A Catalogue of a Rare and Valuable Collection of Books, being the Whole library of the late Mr. Thomas Ruddiman...* (Edinburgh, 1758)

*A Catalogue of the Valuable and Choice Collection of Prints, Books of Prints, Original Pictures and Drawings, Books in Various Languages, Busts and Plaster Figures,*

*Mathematical, Surveying, and Drawing Instruments, the Property of the late Mr. John Baxter, Architect in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1798)

NEW YORK, NEW YORK: GROLIER CLUB LIBRARY

\*04.426/R823/1802, *Ross & Blackwood's Catalogue of Books for 1802, comprehending the library of the late George Haldane, Esq., of Gleneagles, and several other libraries lately purchased* (Edinburgh, 1802)

\*05.421\817\0728, *Catalogue of an Extensive and Valuable Collection of Books and Prints, Chiefly Old: Being the Entire Library of the late William Stewart, Esq., of Spoutwells* (Perth, 1817)

*A Catalogue of one of the finest collections of books that ever were exposed to sale in this country, partly the library of Robert Alexander Esq.* (Edinburgh, 1775)

*A Catalogue of a very large collection of books in most languages and faculties, containing, among other libraries, that of James Smollett, Esq., of Bonhill, lately deceased* (Edinburgh, 1776)

NEW YORK, NEW YORK: PUBLIC LIBRARY

\*GO (Queensberry), *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books, including the libraries of James, the Second Duke of Queensberry, and the late Alexander Gibson Hunter Esq. of Blackness* (Edinburgh, 1818)

\*KAC (Roxburghe), *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Duke of Roxburghe* (London, 1812)

WASHINGTON, DC: FOLGER SHAKESPEARE INSTITUTE LIBRARY

245-195q, William Cullen, *A Treatise on Materia Medica*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1777)

153-308q, David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Various Subjects*, 2 vols (London, 1777)

*A Catalogue of Valuable Books; being the Library of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Pitcairne, Minister of the Gospel at West-Kirk, Edinburgh; to be sold by way of Auction at Musselburgh the 15th of January 1752* (n.p., no date)

*A Catalogue of the Large and Valuable Library of Doctor John Campbell, Author of the Political Survey of Great Britain; the Lives of the Admirals, and many other works; Also, the Library and Manuscripts of Richard Blyke, Esq., Both Deceased* (London, 1776)

*Other Printed Primary Sources and Pre-1900 Scholarship*

Alison, Archibald, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Dublin, 1790)

Anderson, John, *Prize Essay on the State of Society and Knowledge in the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1807)

Anderson, W., *The Scottish Nation; or, The Surnames, Families, Literature, Honours, and Biographical History of the People of Scotland*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1859–1863)

Andrews, James Pettit, *The History of Great Britain, Connected with the Chronology of Europe with notes etc.* (London, 1794)

Bain, G., *History of Nairnshire* (Nairn, 1893)

Barron, William, *History of the Colonization of the Free States of Antiquity, applied to the Present Contest between Great Britain and her American Colonies* (London, 1777)

Barron, William, *History of the Political Connection between England and Ireland, from the Reign of Henry II to the Present Time* (London, 1780)

Beattie, James, *Dissertations Moral and Critical. On Memory and Imagination. On Dreaming. The Theory of Language. On fable and Romance* (London, 1783)

- Beattie, James, *Elements of Moral Science*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1790–1793)
- Beattie, James, *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth; in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* (Edinburgh, 1770)
- Beattie, James, *Essays. On Poetry and Music,... On Laughter,... On the Utility of Classical Learning* (Edinburgh, 1776)
- Beattie, James Hay, *Essays and Fragments in Prose and Verse. By James Hay Beattie. To which is prefixed an account of the author's life and character* (Edinburgh, 1794)
- Bell's *Common Place Book, for the pocket; form'd generally upon the principles recommended and practised by Mr. Locke* (London, 1770)
- Blair, Hugh, *Sermons*, 5 vols (Edinburgh, 1777–1801)
- Cameron, William, *Poems on Various Occasions* (Edinburgh, 1780)
- Cameron, William, *Poetical Dialogues on Religion in the Scots Dialect, between two gentlemen and two ploughmen* (Edinburgh, 1788)
- Cameron, William, *Ode on Lochiel's Birthday, 1796* (Edinburgh, 1796)
- Campbell, George, *A Dissertation on Miracles: Containing an Examination of the Principles Advanced by David Hume, Esq; in an Essay on Miracles* (Edinburgh, 1762)
- Campbell, George, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London, 1776)
- A Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties of Arts, Divinity and Law of the University of Edinburgh, Since its Foundation*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1858)
- Chapman, George, *Treatise on Education, with a sketch of the author's method of instruction while he taught the school of Dumfries, and a view of other books on education* (Edinburgh, 1773)
- Chapone, Hester, *Improvement of the Mind* (London, 1773)
- Chapters in the Life of a Dundee Factory Boy: An Autobiography* (Dundee, 1850)
- Constable, T., *Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1873)
- Dalrymple, Sir David, Lord Hailes, *Annals of Scotland, from the Accession of Malcolm III Surnamed Canmore to the Accession of Robert I* (Edinburgh, 1797)
- Directions for a Proper Choice of Authors to form a Library* (London, 1766)
- Dundee Directory for 1809* (Dundee, 1809)
- The Dundee Register of Merchants and Trades with all the Public Offices etc for 1783* (Dundee, 1782)
- Elphinston, James, *Animadversions upon Elements of Criticism ...* (London, 1771)
- Encyclopaedia Britannica...* (Edinburgh, 1771)
- Farquhar, John, *Sermons on various subjects...* (London, 1772)
- Ferguson, Adam, *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh, 1767)
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- Ferguson, Adam, *Principles of Moral and Political Science; being chiefly a retrospect of lectures delivered in the college of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1792)
- Fordyce, David, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1754)
- Fordyce, James, *Sermons to Young Women* (London, 1766)
- Foster, J. (ed.), *Members of Parliament, Scotland...1357–1882* (London, 1882)
- Gerard, Alexander, *An Essay on Genius* (London, 1774)
- Gerard, Alexander, *Sermons*, 2 vols (London, 1780–2)
- Gibson, John, *The History of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1777)
- Gordon, P. L., *Personal Memoirs; or Reminiscences of Men and Manners at Home and Abroad, during the last half century*, 2 vols (London, 1830)
- Grant, J., *History of the Burgh and Parish Schools of Scotland* (London, 1876)

- Gregory, John, *Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World* (3rd edn; London, 1766)
- Guthrie, William, *A New System of Modern Geography or a Geographical Historical and Commercial Grammar* (3rd edn; London, 1786)
- Home, Francis, *The Principles of Agriculture and Vegetation* (Edinburgh, 1756)
- Home, Henry, Lord Kames, *Loose Hints upon Education, Chiefly concerning the Culture of the Heart* (Edinburgh, 1781)
- Home, John, *Alonzo: A Tragedy* (London, 1773)
- Home, John, *The History of the Rebellion in the Year 1745* (London, 1802)
- Hume, David, *History of England*, 6 vols (Indianapolis, IN, 1983)
- Humphreys, A. L., *The Private Library* (London, 1897)
- Hunter, Rachel, *Letitia; or, the Castle without a Spectre*, 3 vols (London, 1801)
- Hutcheson, Francis, *Logicae Compendium* (Glasgow, 1759)
- Johnson, Samuel, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*, 10 vols (London, 1779–1781)
- List of the Graduates in Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, from MDCCCV. To MDCCCLVI* (Edinburgh, 1867)
- The Lounger* (Edinburgh, 1785/1787)
- Luard, H. R., *Catalogue of Adversaria and Printed Books Containing MS. Notes, Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1864)
- Macandrew, I. Forsyth, *Memoir of Isaac Forsyth Bookseller in Elgin 1765–1859* (London, 1889)
- MacFarlane, J., *The Life and Times of George Lawson, D.D., Selkirk, professor of theology for the Associate Synod: with glimpses of Scottish character from 1720 to 1820* (Edinburgh, 1862)
- Macpherson, John, *Critical Dissertations on the Origin, Antiquities, Language, Government, Manners and Religion of the Ancient Caledonians* (London, 1768)
- Martine, J., *Reminiscences of the royal burgh of Haddington and old East Lothian agriculturists* (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1883)
- The Mirror*, 2 vols (London, 1794)
- More, Hannah, *Hints Towards forming the Character of a Young Princess* (London, 1805)
- Murray, Thomas, *Literary History of Galloway: from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Edinburgh, 1822)
- Pennant, Thomas, *A Tour in Scotland* (4th edn; Dublin, 1775)
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